LANGUAGE
AND
THEOLOGY

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SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE

Many religious writers today deny the adequacy of human language to express truth concerning God. A statement that God is omnipotent, or merciful, or even that he directed the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, is taken as mythological, parabolic, analogical, or as some poorly defined "pointer" to an unknowable realm beyond human comprehension. Such theories of religious language are partially a reaction against and partially an adaptation of secular theories that had previously disposed of all theology and metaphysics as utter nonsense. Therefore, to understand the religious theories, one must have some knowledge of their secular predecessors.

This language philosophy, whether in its most extreme form of Logical Positivism or Logical Empiricism, or in a less extreme form of the philosophy of Analysis, or in the later forms of ordinary language philosophy, is a strictly twentieth-century phenomenon.

Of course, earlier philosophers showed some interest in language. Plato lampoons the pedantic purism of Prodicus and takes note of more serious questions in his dialogue *Kratylus*. Aristotle is praised or more commonly berated for finding physical and metaphysical guidance in grammar. The Stoics, too, not only pursued the details of grammar and argued for their fatalism on the basis that some propositions are true; they also considered how a word could refer to a thing, and so produced a theory of signification which conflicted with their own basic materialism.[1] Finally Augustine of Hippo wrote a famous treatise, *De Magistro*, on the relation of language to thought and how a pupil could learn from a teacher. But none of these ancient theories of language matched the modern language schools in their intricate detail, nor in their sweeping conclusions about theological language.[2]

Skeletal History

Before the sometimes trivial and often puzzling details are studied, and before the substantial positions and arguments are weighed, a skeletal history of the general development might prove of some small value. It will be hardly more than a list of names and dates. The dates themselves are not so important as dates are in other matters because these men are roughly contemporaries and a strict chronological listing of the theories would obscure any logical continuity. Even so a list of names can provide a convenient reference.

For somewhat insufficient reasons G.E. Moore (1873-1958) is often considered as the initiator of language philosophy. The best reason is his influence on Bertrand Russell. Moore and Russell were originally Hegelians and disciples of F. H. Bradley. Between 1898 and 1904, during frequent discussions with Russell, Moore turned himself and Russell away from Hegelianism, the result of which was his article "The Refutation of Idealism" in 1903. After 1911 he began to think of language. Now in view of Plato and Augustine there seems to be no reason why thinking of language should make a person an empiricist. But the twentieth-century movement, following the realism of Moore, has been almost unanimously empirical. However, though Moore may have been a stimulus or an initiator, he can hardly be called the founder of a school – and that for two reasons: (1) there really was no single school, and (2) Moore, by 1940, after various peregrinations, seems to have returned to something like Bradley again.

It is better to identify Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) as the founder of language philosophy. To say how, at this point, would take us far beyond any skeletal history.

Following Russell in time, but at first independent of him, was a group that can more properly be called a school of philosophy. This was the "Vienna Circle" of Logical Positivism. Despite some loose language in the historical accounts of twentieth-century philosophy, Bertrand Russell was not a Logical Positivist, though their interests overlapped. The Vienna Circle was a group of thinkers who were particularly interested in the philosophy of science. These men were voluminous publishers. In 1917 Moritz Schlick, who may be called the organizer of the school – he died in 1936 – wrote *Space and Time in Contemporary Physics*. In 1919 Ludwig Wittgenstein, whom Otto Neurath and some others considered not quite orthodox, produced his famous *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the doctrines of which he later repudiated as he drew still further away from Vienna orthodoxy.

Rudolf Carnap published "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language" in 1932, and in 1934, *The Logical Syntax of Language*. Then there is Herbert Feigl, who later settled at the University of Minnesota, the author of *The Logical Character of the Principle of Interaction* (1934), *Scientific Method without Metaphysical Presuppositions* (1954), and much else.

Not only did the Vienna men publish books, but also in 1929 they organized an international congress, held at Prague; and other congresses followed. One may also mention Otto Neurath, Philipp Frank, and Kurt Gödel. These men were driven from the comfort of their Vienna home by the increasing power of Hitler, and found refuge chiefly in England and America.

With the geographical dissolution of the Vienna Circle, the term *Logical Positivism* came to be extended to several philosophers who, though sympathetic with the main ideas of the Vienna group, were not so strictly scientific, and who also began to diverge in various directions.

A.J. Ayer made a great impression in 1936 with *his Language, Truth, and Logic*; a second edition, with a modifying introduction, came ten years later.

Along with Ayer's first edition, Gilbert Ryle in his *Systematic Misleading Expressions* (1931) and his *Concept of Mind* (1949) is doubtless closer to the original Circle than most of the later authors. There is no Circle now; but language philosophers, especially religious philosophers, flourish in abundance.

Such is a skeletal history of language philosophy, especially secular language philosophy. Its most vigorous anti-religious and anti-metaphysical exemplars were the Logical Positivists. But even in their heyday, they did not succeed in convincing every language philosopher. There were some, not necessarily orthodox in theology, who refused to dismiss religious language as syntactical nonsense. Much less would they abandon poetry and morality. Wilbur Marshall Urban in *Language and Reality* (1924) may be conveniently taken as a logical, though not a chronological, intermediary between the uncompromising anti-religious Logical Positivists and the religious writers of a later date. The present program, therefore, will begin with Bertrand Russell. Then the Logical Positivists can be interpreted as more consistent exponents of some of his views. Carnap surely expressed the anti-metaphysical conclusions of language philosophy more clearly than Russell did. Indeed, Russell himself was not anti-metaphysical, however anti-religious he may have been. Following this will come A.J. Ayer and the difficulties of formulating a satisfactory principle of verification. After this the account must reverse the chronology and return to Urban in 1924. And finally there will be the explicit, though diverse, defenses of some sort of religious language.

1 See Emile Bréhier, *La Théorie des Incorporels dans l'Ancien Stoicisme*.

2 There is a certain inaccuracy or inadequacy in these statements. Not to mention Rousseau, who dropped the problem in despair, there were also K.F. Becker, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte, Herder, George Smith, Josiah Gibbs, Max Müller, Benjamin J. Taylor,

Charles de Brosses, and Horace Bushnell.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Difficulties in Understanding Him

Although Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), both by chronology and by reason of the less consistent content, is more properly the founder of the modern language philosophy than the Vienna group, and should therefore receive extensive consideration, it is almost impossible to give an account, both accurate and complete, of his position.

The first reason is that his contributions are voluminous and detailed, very detailed, with the result that any complete account would be more voluminous than Russell himself. The second reason is that he changed his opinions too frequently. This fact may do honor to his honesty in acknowledging flaws and correcting them to meet objections, often his own; but it imposes on critics the burden of writing a chapter or a book on Russell I, and a second volume on Russell II, on to Russell IX or so. The third and most annoying reason is that by his own admission he has not said and cannot say what he means. In reply to Bradley, with reference to unities and simples, Russell says that "the topic is one with which language by its very nature is peculiarly unfitted to deal. I must beg the reader therefore to be indulgent if what I say is not exactly what I mean, and try to see what I mean in spite of unavoidable linguistic obstacles to clear expressions."[1] Again, this does honor to his honesty, but it also suggests that perhaps he might just have stumbled into an impossible task.

In spite of many modest assertions of the tentativeness of his opinions, Russell is bold in "endeavoring all the way through to make the views I advocate result *inevitably* from *absolutely undeniable data*."[2] Then he shortly adds, "the data which are undeniable to start with are always rather vague and ambiguous." How can anything result *inevitably* from what is vague and ambiguous? On the very next page he acknowledges that "when you pass from the vague to the precise by the method…that I am speaking of, you always run a certain risk of error…. I shall run a great many risks and it will be extremely likely that any precise statement I make will be something not true at all."

Other passages also show that Russell does not understand the meaning of the words he writes; and on his own assurances it is certain that no one else knows what Russell means.

> When one person uses a word, he does not mean by it the same thing as another person means by it…. It would be absolutely fatal if people meant the same thing by their words…. The meaning you attach to your words must depend on the nature of the objects you are acquainted with, and since different people are acquainted with different objects, they would not be able to talk to each other unless they attached quite different meanings to their words [195].

Note that Russell does not say that *sometimes* people use the word in different senses; he says (implicitly) *always*. Perhaps he thinks it an undeniable datum that no two people ever use a word in the same sense. But it is at least possible that one or two persons might be bold enough to deny it. At any rate, on Russell's own principles, no one who discusses him can know what he meant.

Perhaps Russell knew what he meant, sometimes; but on very fundamental matters he quite often did not know what he was saying. After laying down certain "provisional definitions," he added, "This is not absolutely correct, but it will enable you to understand my meaning" (196). "All our words are ambiguous" (197).

There is also a slightly different type of difficulty that a critic must face. Russell sometimes makes

statements that he retracts pages later. Then the critic has to re-read the earlier pages or chapters to see if the later assertion alters the force of the intervening argument. This may not be an impossible task for the critic, but it is annoying. For example, "But a belief is true or false in the same way a proposition is, so that you do have facts [this belief] in the world that are true or false. I said a while back that there was no distinction of true or false among facts, but as regard that special class of facts that we call 'beliefs,' there is" (227). Or, again, "I have been talking, for brevity's sake, as if there really were all these different sorts of things. Of course, this is nonsense" (265). Kindly permit one further and final reference: "In some respects, my published work, outside mathematical logic, does not at all completely represent my beliefs or my general outlook."[3]

Taken very strictly, these references make the work of a critic as impossible as it is useless. This may seem to be an extreme and ungrateful conclusion; but Max Black, in the Schilpp volume (229-231), says much the same thing, even if in gentler terms. However, Max Black and the present writer cheerfully acknowledge that Russell I to Russell IX can supply some valuable thoughts, not to the critic or historian as such, but to the constructive thinker for the development of his own position, provided always that the constructive thinker resolutely rejects Russell's proposition that no two people ever use a word in the same sense.

The Need of a New Language

The exposition of Russell's philosophy, for the present purpose, ought to stay close to his views on language. But any theory of language soon merges with psychology, logic, and perhaps metaphysics, not to mention epistemology. These subjects, of course, use language, and most philosophers write in English, French, German, or Greek. Aristotle's Greek was somewhat technical, Plato's was "ordinary language," however literary in style. But Russell finds that ordinary language is so confused and confusing that its effects on philosophy have been disastrous; and, therefore, a new language is necessary.

For example, Russell says,

> It is exceedingly difficult to make this point clear as long as one adheres to ordinary language, because ordinary language is rooted in a certain feeling about logic, a certain feeling that our primeval ancestors had, and as long as you keep to ordinary language [which Russell on occasion can use with tremendous literary effect] you find it very difficult to get away from the bias which is imposed upon you by language.[4]

This long sentence alludes to the psychology of primitive peoples, to the effect of their bias on the origin of language, and, in the context, to the relation of propositional functions to propositions and individuals. At the moment it must serve only to show Russell's rejection of ordinary language and his desire to create an artificial ideal language. He enforces this point in the following paragraph by saying, "I think an almost unbelievable amount of false philosophy has arisen through not realizing what 'existence' means." And between these two sentences he says, "The only way you can really state it correctly is by inventing a new language ad hoc…."

Again, in "Logical Atomism" in *Logical Positivism* (A.J. Ayer, editor, 36), Russell says, "the ontological argument and most of its refutations are found to depend on bad grammar" (see *Principia Mathematica*, 14). Of course, he does not mean that Anselm used split infinitives or that Kant failed to make adjectives agree in gender: Grammar for Russell is something more than grammar, for unfortunately the words of ordinary language are not precise. In other places he shows how confused it is to say, "Scott was the author of *Waverley*," and "all men are mortal." This is sufficient to show that Russell wanted to invent an artificial language and so escape the paradoxes of the mother tongue.

The Difficulties of Ordinary Language

These assertions of the need for a new, artificial, ideal language introduce us to the substance of the argument. The first question must be, What, specifically, are the paradoxes that need solution? Everyone recognizes that language and expression are beset with ambiguities and misunderstandings. This is an everyday occurrence. But it does not follow that every such instance is the key, or the lock, to a profound metaphysical blunder. It is at least possible, subject to further examination, that some of the difficulties Russell alleges are quite trivial. Others of them have long been recognized as both difficult and embarrassing. Anyone who has studied a little medieval philosophy, or is to some extent acquainted with the history of logic, knows about the *insolubilia* – problems so difficult that no solution is possible. Now, Russell believes that they can be solved. But the critic must ask, Cannot they be solved by ordinary language? In fact, is it even possible to dispense with ordinary language? If these two questions be answered, "No, they cannot," and "Yes, it is possible," there remains the final question, Does Russell's artificial language succeed? Some of what follows may suggest that occasionally Russell's language is worse than the one he discards.

Let us then state some of the specific difficulties, beginning with one of the standard medieval *insolubilia* that Russell mentions, namely, the case of the Cretan liar. The problem assumes that Cretans never speak the truth. Everything they say is a lie. We now meet a Cretan who tells us, "I am a liar." But for this to be true, as it is assumed to be, it must be false. Worse, if this be false, as it is not, it is certainly true, for if the liar is lying, he has certainly told the truth.

Ordinary liars, of course, sometimes speak the truth; and if one such says, "I am a liar," he is telling the plain unparadoxical truth. But Cretans, so we assumed, tell nothing but lies. Before Russell's solution is given, and before other difficulties are enumerated, ordinary language might reply: On the assumption that Cretans tell nothing but lies, it is impossible that any Cretan should say, "I am a liar." The so-called paradox arises because the paradoxer asserts two contradictory propositions. It is impossible for both to be true. Therefore, the person who wishes to puzzle us, if he is to say anything meaningful, must chose between asserting that all Cretans tell nothing but lies and the supposition that one Cretan says, "I am a liar." The laws of logic, particularly the law of contradiction, forbid the insolubilist from making both statements. And if he does not make both statements, there is no difficulty. To put it simply: No such Cretan would admit that he was a liar.

There is also the clever puzzle about the barber who shaves only those, but all of those, who do not shave themselves. Does this barber shave himself or not? Well, of course, if he shaves himself, he cannot shave himself, for he shaves only those who do not shave themselves. But if he does not shave himself, he must shave himself, for he shaves all those who do not shave themselves. Russell admits that this puzzle is not too hard to solve; but to the present writer there seems to be a different and easier solution than the one Russell offers. As in the case of the Cretan liar, this, too, is a disguised contradiction. Its suppositions or requirements are logically incompatible. There is no paradox. The person propounding the puzzle is simply making two statements that cannot both be true. Hence, there is no need of an ideal, artificial language with complicated formulas. But Russell wants to associate it with other forms that resemble Plato's "Third Man" argument.

Before this ancient and more complicated problem is taken up, several more preparatory considerations can contribute to the background material. Each one makes some advance to more technical levels. This one concerns Russell's "pure form of all general propositions." A completely general proposition is one which contains only variables. Russell gives a series of successive generalizations:

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Socrates loves Plato.

x loves Plato.

x loves *y*.

x R*y*.

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As *x* can mean any man or any thing, so R can mean any relation. This final form is so general that it is the pure form of all general propositions. Then Russell continues, "Suppose I say: '*x* R *y* implies that *x* belongs to the domain of R….' You might think it contains such words as 'belong' and 'domain' [and we might also add 'imply'], but that is an error. It is only the habit of using ordinary language that makes these words appear. They are not really there."[5] One might be excused for thinking that they are really there; but other matters call for consideration before criticism begins.

Another example of confusions due to ordinary language comes in Lecture VI, "Descriptions and Incomplete Symbols." Russell wishes to distinguish between a name and a description. There are several instances mentioned; for example, "Romulus is not really a name, but a sort of truncated description." More space, however, is given to " Scott," which apparently is at least sometimes a name, and "the author of *Waverley*," which is obviously a description. The reason that this phrase is not a name is that anyone who understands the English words separately immediately understands the phrase also. But the word "Scott" gives us no information at all. That is, the four words, "the author of *Waverley*," have had their respective meanings fixed in the language before ever they were put together in this phrase; but let all other English words be so fixed, yet they provide no meaning for "Scott."

Now, there is nothing surprising, nor particularly useful, in distinguishing names from phrases, unless Russell continues by analyzing the statement "Scott was the author of *Waverley*." In one place his analysis is: There is an entity c such that the statement "*x* wrote *Waverley*," is true if *x* is c and false otherwise; and *c* is Scott. To the uninitiated this may sound doubtful, and certainly sounds awkward. Surely it is no improvement over ordinary English. But what is not so awkward and by no means trivial is his conclusion that this clears up two millennia of muddle-headedness about " existence," beginning with Plato's *Theaetetus*.

How the concept of existence comes to intrude here requires further remarks on Sir Walter. Also involved is the meaning of the word is. In " Logical Atomism" he complains that Western languages are constructed on a subject-predicate form.[6] Non-Aryan languages do not need subjects and predicates, except in connection with Buddhist theology.[7] This accounts for subject-predicate logic and substance-attribute metaphysics in Greek.

Before returning to Scott one might note that poor old Socrates had a most difficult time explaining to his fellow Greeks the difference between a universal and an individual. Even after Hippias admits that justice, wisdom, and goodness are "something," and that beauty is "something real," he replies to the question, "What is beauty – not what is a beautiful thing?" (*ού τι έστι χαλον αλλ ό τι έστι το χαλον*), "a beautiful girl" (*Greater Hippias*, 287c-3). Could it not be that human rationality led man to use subjects and predicates, rather than subjects and predicates having deceived us regarding universals?[8]

Sir Walter Scott, therefore, plus existence and the analysis of propositions, must continue to be considered. Russell's proofs that the phrase is not a name are as follows: "In 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' the 'is,' of course, expresses identity, *i.e.* the entity whose name is Scott is identical with the author of *Waverley*. But when I say 'Scott is mortal' this 'is' is the 'is' of predication, which is quite different from the 'is' of identity."[9]

The next of these several points, all of which are related in one way or another, is Russell's contrast between verbs and the copula. Traditional logic reduces sentences in which ordinary verbs occur, such as, "Men think," to "Men are thinkers." "Men" is the subject, and "thinkers" is the predicate. Hence all arguments can be symbolized and tested for validity by putting them in some such form as "*A(ba) A(cb)* implies *A(ca)*." For Russell the subject-copula-predicate scheme has, if not validly, at least psychologically, led philosophers into the confusions of substantialism. Now, if this is merely a psychological mistake, it is irrelevant. Everyone makes mistakes. Russell really ought to insist that the subject-copula-predicate scheme forces Aristotelian metaphysics on everyone who uses it. This is hardly credible; but at any rate the larger problem focuses our attention on the question whether propositions always have predicates, or whether sometimes ordinary verbs cannot be so reduced.

One of Russell's examples where the copula-predicate analysis cannot fit is the relation "is greater than"; for example, "three is greater than two." This example is cited in a paragraph opposing Hegel's all-embracing, internal relation theory. Symmetrical dyadic relations can indeed be reduced to sameness of predicate; but with asymmetrical relations it is impossible. This impossibility, says Russell, "is a matter of a good deal of importance…because a great deal of traditional philosophy depends upon the assumption that every proposition really is of the subject-predicate form, and that is certainly not the case" (Marsh, 207).

To dull the force of Russell's contention, an example of an asymmetrical relation reduced to the subject-copula-predicate scheme and put in syllogistic form may help. Take the inference: Three is greater than two, two is greater than one, therefore three is greater than one. The "is" here is not the copula, but the phrase "is greater than." The inference is not syllogistic because if it be put in copula form, namely,

(Three) is *(greater than two)*
(Two) is *(greater than one)*

there is no middle term. However, this does not prove the impossibility of putting the argument in syllogistic form, namely,

All *three's* are *greater than two's*;
All *greater than two's* are *greater than one's;*
Therefore, all *three's* are *greater than one's.*

As was said before, one of the reasons Russell wants verbs instead of copulas is that the copula form leads to the Aristotelian concept of substance. But it is not at all clear that such is the case. Aristotle himself allows quantities, qualities, relations and the other categories to serve as subject concepts in propositions; and this does not make a quality a substance. In one of Aristotle's syllogisms the twinkling of a star is a subject, and twinkling no doubt falls under the category of action. Therefore, to say nothing stronger, Russell's argument against traditional logic on this basis is unsuccessful.

Involved in all this is Plato's "Third Man" argument. The *Parmenides* expounds an objection to the theory of Ideas: If the similarity between Socrates and Crito requires us to posit the Idea, Man, then the similarity between Socrates-Crito and Man requires an Idea-prime, or Third Man. Since this initiates an infinite regress, the Ideal theory is untenable. Plato leaves all but one of seven objections

unanswered; and this is not that one. But does it not seem strange that a genuis of Plato's stature would have left them unanswered unless he had believed the answers to be readily discoverable, especially since he continues with the Ideal theory in his subsequent dialogues? In the *Parmenides* he signs off with

> a very brilliant man will be able to understand that there is a genus for each thing and an absolute reality *per se*…. But if anyone denies the existence of Ideas of things, because of the objections above and similar ones[!],… he will not know how to conduct his thought…and thus he completely destroys the possibility of argumentation.

Russell Versus Logic

This of course does not prohibit Russell from making the attempt. "You can start," Russell says (Marsh, 259), "with the question whether or not there is a greatest cardinal number." To say No results in the curiosity that there are more numbers than there are [other] things in the world. Infinity may indeed be a curiosity for some people; but a little arithmetic shows that it is always possible to add one, and hence the number series is infinite. Of course, if the other (Russell omits this word) things happen to be infinite, instead of finite as Russell seems silently to suppose, the cardinal numbers and the other things would be equal, so that one of them would not be greater than the other. Without considering this minor flaw, for it only applies to the uneducated curiosity seeker, Russell argues that particulars (individual things?) and classes do not exist in the same sense. The reason is that a world of three particulars would produce eight classes (*ab, ac, cd, abc*, as well as *a, b, c* alone and zero), and therefore this world would have eleven things (existents?). But when he concludes, "That, on the face of it, seems to land you in a contradiction" (260), we can admire his quip, "There are *fewer* things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy," but we cannot accept his logic: It just does not follow. It would not follow, so it seems to one person, even were the ambiguities which are indicated in the parentheses above removed.

If, however, Russell's argument still seems valid or at least plausible to others, the point may be better determined by an analysis of Russell's further explanation. He asks us to consider those classes which are not members of themselves. "You would say generally that you would not expect a class to be a member of itself. For instance, if you take the class of all the teaspoons [Man] in the world, that is not itself a teaspoon [a man]."[10] In ancient language this means that a sensory individual, if there are any such, is not an Idea. But Russell seems to shift unwittingly to a different problem. Instead of continuing with sensory individuals, his discussion concerns the relationships among classes. As with the barber, he now asks, Is the class of classes that are not members of themselves, a member of itself or not?

> Suppose that it is a member of itself. In that case it is one of those classes that are not members of themselves, *i.e.*, it is not a member of itself. Let us then suppose that it is not a member of itself. In that case it is not one of those classes that are not members of themselves, *i.e.*, it is one of those classes that are members of themselves, *i.e.*, it is a member of itself, *etc.* [261].

The answer to this, so it seems to the present writer, is that every class is a member of itself. Were this not so, logic would be impossible. In fact, Russell himself says so. The symbolic logic he desires to substitute for ordinary language depends on the axiom, $a < a$. All the a's are a's. One is included in one, and zero is included in zero. Anything else, as Parmenides said, "completely destroys the possibility of argumentation."

There is one final remark, or two, concerning an artificial ideal language, which might be postponed until the completion of the material on Wittgenstein, for it applies to him as well, but which can be placed here because it attaches to a sentence in Russell's *Preface* to the *Tractatus* (translated

by Pears and McGuiness, page x). Russell states, "In speaking of a 'complex' we are, as will appear later, sinning against the rules of philosophical grammar, but this is unavoidable at the outset."

Here Russell admits that ordinary language is indispensable. No artificial language can be constructed without it. But in addition – what Russell did not say – artificial language is not indispensable. Not strictly, formally, and rigorously indispensable.

Symbolic logic, like arithmetic and algebra, is a useful technique. Modern civilization could not have developed without them. But this does not mean that ordinary language can be discarded. On the contrary, ordinary language not only is indispensable for the construction of symbolisms; symbolisms can always be translated back into ordinary language. To take an easy example: from the equation $a^2 + 2ab + b^2 = 0$ the value of a is neatly determined by the rules of quadratics. We would not want to do without them; and it is possible that the solution would never have been discovered without the symbolism. But it could have been; and the equation can be put into ordinary, if awkward, English. The English would go: A number multiplied by itself, added to double its product with another number, and then added to that other number multiplied by itself, equals zero. Now, no one wants to talk this way. It is much easier to write a short line of symbols instead of two or three lines of English. But the philosophic point is that not only can the equation be expressed in English, but that without ordinary English the equation could never have been understood. *Plus*, *exponent*, *multiplication*, *equality* had to begin in ordinary language. And even today a small amount of English appears here and there to indicate what some part of a formula means.

These arguments seem sufficient to dispose of the thesis that ordinary language should be abandoned and replaced by an artificial symbolism. Two things, however, remain to be done. First, there are metaphysical, as well as linguistic, assumptions that underlie this desire for an ideal language. And second, there is the symbolic logic itself, the perfection of which requires evaluation.

Now, first, the brief intellectual biography at the beginning noted that Russell early renounced Hegelianism and became an empiricist. This change started with an attack on Bradley's, and Hegel's, theory of internal relations and the substitution of an atomic theory of external relations. The former, holding that everything is implicated in everything, results in an absolute monism. The definition of *cat* for example, is part of the definition of *dog*, and also of *Betelgeuse*. For Russell, relations are external to the objects related. These relations, though it seems strange to say so, are grasped by immediate sense perception. This seems strange because it is hard to see what color *above* and *to the left of* are, or to hear what noises *uncle* and is *greater than* give off. However, such are the atoms of Russell's world.

In conformity with this, propositions are true in isolation. A proposition is true if it corresponds to an atomic fact or a combination of them. "The car is in the garage" is true if we see a car, a garage, and an *in*. Thus, language consists of words, each of which designates a sensory individual.

To be fair to Russell, one must acknowledge that he later modified such an absurdity. He came to doubt the reality of *is* and *the*, if not *in*. These non-realities he then explained as the Logical Positivists did later, as parts of a logical framework without objective referents. This framework became his symbolic logic. An earlier section of this chapter noted that Russell changed his mind every so often. The critic cannot simply say, *This* is Russell's view. In fact, he even changed his meaning of the word *this*. The critic, therefore, at least this critic, can hope only for reasonable accuracy in repeating some of Russell's views and then analyzing those chosen. These analyses are supposed to help in any constructive work the reader is inclined to attempt.

It does seem, however, that over a long period Russell believed in the logical independence of every fact and the theory of external relations. It is hard to think of any empirical philosophy that can

believe otherwise. Nevertheless, Aristotle the empiricist, not to mention Hegel and Bradley, notes phenomena that ill accord with logical atomism. Uneducated people talk about the five senses, and touch is one of the five. But Aristotle knew that what we call touch is three different senses. He explained the common misapprehension on the ground that the skin is not the sense organ, but a medium that serves three different organs underneath. Now, if the air, continues Aristotle, were a part of the body, enveloping the face as the skin does the fingers, we would suppose that smell, taste, hearing, and sight are all one. Even as it is, though Aristotle does not mention it, we cannot be sure that sight is a single sense. Maybe there are as many senses as there are rods and cones in the retina. The difficulty here is in identifying an atomic sense. Russell himself lamely replies, this is as simple as I can now make it.

The troubles with atomism, however, are still greater. Is any proposition true in isolation? Would an atom by itself be the same regardless of how the rest of the world might change? There are plausible examples that it would not. Here is a rock that weighs six pounds. But if an astronaut carries it into space it weighs approximately zero. When he drops it on the Moon, it weighs one pound. The truth of these propositions depends on the relation of the rock to the other parts of the universe. No one is true in isolation. Obesity is cured by a trip to the Moon.

Another example is a piece of canvas painted half red and half green – or any other two colors. Through these two halves of the canvas paint a stroke of gray, a mixture of black and white; but it will not be gray on the canvas. The single stoke of paint will be one color on the top half of the canvas and a different color on the bottom half. Since everything seen has a background, its color is a function of its background. It is false to say it remains what it is no matter how the rest of the universe changes.

One further example. If there were no sense of sight, there would be no sense of hearing. If there were nothing hard, there would be nothing soft. If there were no animals, there could be no plants. The reason is that each of these terms expresses a distinction from its opposites. Sight is a form of non-hearing. Were they the same, we might have the term *sensation*, but we would not have two terms of different meaning. The terms "plant" and "animal" would not apply to different objects, if there were no different objects. There might be "living beings," but no plants and animals. Similarly, there would be no living beings, if there were no non-living beings. This should be sufficient to dispose of logical atomism.

The final section on Russell must now dwell on the basic propositions of his artificial language – the first few steps in his symbolic logic. George Boole, the inventor of symbolic logic, may have aimed to express Aristotelian logic in symbols. Can the square of opposition, its contradiction, contrariety, subalternation, and subcontrariety be preserved, plus, of course, obversion, simple conversion, and any other elementary terms? What about categorical forms? What does it mean to say that "All Athenians are Greeks"? What does *all* mean? But between George Boole's original attempt and Russell's *Principia Mathematica*, the logicians had concluded that this could not be done.

Russell explained that "all men are mortal" means "*if* anything is a man, it is mortal." It does not mean that there are any men. However, the phrase, "*Some* men are mortal" means "there exists at least one man and he is mortal." Hence if *all* men are mortal, it does not follow that *some* are. If *all* dogs are canines, it is invalid to infer that some dogs, for example, bull dogs, are. What has happened is that the symbolism invented between 1850 and 1900, although it preserved contradiction and obversion, made subalternation a fallacy.

A little symbolism, just a little, explains how. First the terms "zero" and "one" were introduced. If any two classes may be multiplied together, as they must to preserve generality, that is, joined together by the conjunction "and," such as x is both a dog and brown, it follows that the multiplication

of contradictory or contrary classes results in the zero class, the null class, a class said to have no members, including nothing. Then next, since two contradictories exhaust the field, the addition or disjunction of two contradictories results in the number *one*, the universe, said to include everything. For that matter, since every class must have a contradictory, to preserve generality, the contradictory of zero is one. Zero contains nothing; the universe, or the universe of discourse, contains everything: It is the class that exhausts whatever the subject of discussion happens to be. With this the proof that subalternation is a fallacy is as follows.

$$A(ab) = a < b \text{ \{definition\}}$$

This reads, class *a* is included in the class *b*. Therefore, by obversion

$$E(ab) = a < b \ V.$$

The sign <, when used in mathematics, means "is less than"; and this is a factor in developing mathematics from symbolic logic. Similarly, the plus sign of mathematics indicates disjunction in logic because

$$(a + b)c = ac + bc,$$

that is, cat and either auburn or black equals an auburn cat or a black cat. The *ac* and *bc* are examples of multiplication: The object is both a cat and a black object.

The refutation of subalteration now proceeds:

$$\text{All } a \text{ is } b \text{ implies Some } a \text{ is } b$$
$$A(ab) < I(ab) \text{ \{substitution\}}$$
$$(a < b) < (a < b \ V) \ V.$$

Since *E(ab)* is *(a < b V)*, its contradictory *I* is *(a < bV) V*. Since further *a* and *b* are variables and can take on any meaning, the next line is a special case of the previous line.

$$(o < o) < (o < o \ V) \ V.$$

But the contradictory of zero is one; therefore

$$(o < o) < (o < i)V.$$

Since every class is included in itself, *(o < o)* must be a true statement. But since the universe includes all classes, zero must be included in the universe. Its negation is false. Hence the last line of the symbolism has a true premise and a false conclusion. Therefore *all* does not imply *some*.

From these definitions of the categorical forms it is possible to develop an extensive symbolic logic. But instead of providing us with twenty-four valid syllogisms, it gives us only nineteen. There is no fallacy in this development. Everything follows rigorously from the initial definitions. But it is a restricted system. It is like a geometry that has only seven lines with three points on each line. Theorems can be deduced, but too few. In other words, modern logic has failed to put Aristotelian logic into symbolic form. Its language cannot say as much as ordinary English can.

The source of the flaw is the initial definition. If (all *a* is *b*) means (*a* is included in *b*), subalternation cannot be defended. But should not this result have prompted the logicians to find a formula for *all* that would have expressed the English meaning? After all, *a* < *b* is an arbitrary choice. It is Russell's choice. Anyone else is as free as Russell was to choose a different definition. By a different definition *all* can imply *some*. Such a definition might be

$$(a < b) [(b < a) + (a < b \ V) \ V (b \ V < a) \ V].$$

Corresponding to Euler's diagrams rather than to Venn's, this formula will produce

$$AE < o \text{ therefore}$$
$$A < I$$

There is some difficulty with this formula. It would require us to treat zero much as it is treated in arithmetical division. Whether this is fatal or not, one must decide for himself. However, there is a more pointed difficulty with Russell's definition than its arbitrary nature. When Aristotle said, All the *a*'s are *b*'s, he meant that every *a* is a *b*. But when Russell asserts, as the definition of *all*, that *(o < i)*, he cannot say that every zero is a one. This means that Russell's definition of *all* does not reproduce the English meaning of *all*. If, then, Russell is not talking English, perhaps when all dogs are canines, some dogs may not be canines.

The conclusion is that artificial languages have certain degrees of utility. But ordinary language is indispensable. Perhaps it should be added that a person should say what he means, or at least mean what he says.

1 Bertrand Russell, "Logical Atomism" (1924), in *Logical Positivism*, A.J. Ayer, editor 1959, 43.

2 "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" (1918), in *Logic and Knowledge*, R.C. Marsh, editor, 1956, 178-179.

3 *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, Paul A. Schilpp, editor, 1944, 16.

4 *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, edited by Marsh, 234.

5 *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, edited by Marsh, 238-239.

6 A friend of mine who has lived with the Navajos, speaks their language, and has translated English books into Navajo, reports that he can find no basic difference between the structure of Navajo thought and the logic of Greek or English.

7 A friend of mine who has lived with the Navajos, speaks their language, and has translated English books into Navajo, reports that he can find no basic difference between the structure of Navajo thought and the logic of Greek or English.

8 Russell indeed addresses himself to this question in the following pages; but he seems to have altered it somewhat so that his answer does not apply.

9 *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Marsh, 244*ff*.

10 *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Marsh, 260.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

Although it was impossible to cover all of Russell's philosophy, for it is extremely extensive, someone might with difficulty do justice to Wittgenstein (1889-1951). The difference lies in the fact that while Russell changed his mind with every succeeding volume, Wittgenstein made but one major shift, repudiating the early *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and substituting his *Philosophical Investigations*. Born in Vienna, he came to Manchester in 1911, then went to Cambridge where he studied under Russell, and though serving in the Austrian army, published his *Tractatus* during the war. He returned to England in 1929. During 1932-1934 he wrote his *Philosophical Grammar*, in which he seems to make a step or two toward his later views. Wittgenstein died in 1951 and his *Philosophical Investigations* was published posthumously in 1953, a partly dictated and partly corrected edition of his students' lecture notes.

As Russell was never a Logical Positivist, so Wittgenstein was not a strictly orthodox member of the Vienna Circle. Both men indulged, perhaps more than they realized, in metaphysics; and Wittgenstein added a touch of mysticism ill in accord with the ideals of Unified Science. From the *Tractatus*: "6.44 It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists." The conflicting tendencies toward Logical Positivism and toward Platonic mysticism, if this phrase is at all permitted, are found in "My Mental Development" (in Schilpp, editor, 12). Wittgenstein writes, "Bradley argued everything common sense believes in is mere appearance; we reverted to the opposite extreme and thought that *everything* [his italics] is real that common sense, uninfluenced by philosophy or theology, supposes real…. We allowed ourselves to think that grass is given…and also that there is a pluralistic timeless world of Platonic Ideas." Does this mean that a timeless world of Platonic Ideas is the view of common sense, uninfluenced by philosophy or theology? But let it pass.

The Tractatus

With such caveats Wittgenstein is closely related to the Vienna Circle. Apparently it was from him that they adopted the tautological view of logic and mathematics. They both held that the role of philosophy is precisely the clarification of language. Wittgenstein does indeed have a tinge of metaphysics, and among other things accepts Russell's theory of external relations (4.122); nevertheless, toward the end of the *Tractatus* he is frequently critical of Russell (3.331, 3.333, 5.535, 5.5422, 6.123, 6.1232) and had earlier enunciated very Positivistic theses, namely,

> 4.0031 All philosophy is a critique of language. 4.111 Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences…. 4.112 Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity…. Philosophy does not result in "philosophical propositions," but rather in the clarification of propositions…. 4.113 Philosophy settles controversies about the limits of natural science.

These theses and others like them not only limit philosophy to a study of language, but also limit knowledge to the results of the positive sciences. Other so-called philosophic or religious language is nonsense (compare 4.003).

These introductory remarks have brought us partway into the *Tractatus*. Perhaps it is best to return to its beginning. The opening propositions of that great work hardly encourage a reader to proceed. The machinery clanks: "1. The world is all that is the case. 1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not

of things." Presumably this defines the world by equating "the case" with "facts," and distinguishing them from "things." "1.12 For the totality of *facts* determines what is the case." These "facts" exist in "logical space." Logical space is not further explained.

Aside from the fact (?) that "fact" and "case" are identical, making one of the two terms superfluous, the same identity makes it strange to say that "the totality of facts *determines* what is the case." There is really no determination: The words *fact* and *case* are synonymous.

Proposition 1.21 gives something more substantive: "Each item can be the case or not while everything else remains the same." This is a theme common to Russell, Wittgenstein, and the Logical Positivists. But it is neither an empirical discovery nor a tautology. It is a universal proposition, as universal as any proposition could possibly be, for it asserts something about every item in the universe, past, present, and future. As such it is a metaphysical principle accepted as a substitute for Hegel's internal relations. Now, Russell openly admits some metaphysics; Wittgenstein does so less openly; but the strict Logical Positivists, as will be plain and evident in the next section on Carnap, abhor all metaphysics with a holy hatred – no, unholy, for holy is too theological. But the theory of a pluralistic universe is itself metaphysical. As a universal proposition it cannot be established by finite observations. As metaphysical it should be ruled out by the Positivistic theory of language. But it permeates Logical Positivism.

In case a *case*, a *fact*, a *thing*, and the *items* of the preceding quotation are unclear, Wittgenstein continues: "2. What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs. 2.01 A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things)."

But if a state of *affairs* is a state of *things*, identifying *affairs* and *things*, and if a *fact* is a state of *affairs*, how can the world be a "totality of facts, not of things"? This confusion would lead the most recalcitrant to favor an artificial, ideal language, or else a better command of German.

Wittgenstein's metaphysical foundation comes to the surface every so often. Proposition 2.0123 is as Hegelian as Hegel himself could wish. It reads, "If I know an object [a thing] I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs [states of things]. Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object. A new possibility cannot be discovered later." Indeed, this is more Hegelian than Hegel himself. The great Absolute Idealist held that the simplest object implicitly contains the universe. If it were different in any way, every other thing in the universe would be different. It would be a completely different universe. But Hegel never asserted that knowledge of a single thing is itself an explicit knowledge of "all its possible occurrences." There must be an analytic or dialectic process to bring these implicit relationships to light.

Wittgenstein offers further metaphysics:

> 2.024 Substance is what subsists independently of what is the case. 2.025 It is form and content. 2.0251 Space, time, and color (being colored) are forms of objects…. 2.027 Objects, the unalterable, and the subsistent are one and the same. 2.0271 Objects are what is unalterable and subsistent; their configuration is what is changing and unstable. 2.0272 The configuration of objects produces states of affairs…. 2.062 From the existence or non-existence of one state of affairs it is impossible to infer the existence or non-existence of another.

At the least this section is puzzling.[1] Whatever is symbolized by the new term *substance* is independent of the "case," the "facts," a "state of affairs," or "state of things." Yet "substance" is "form and content." Now, if all reality consists solely of visible "things," "being colored" may be an unalterable "form" of objects; but surely "context" includes the particular color at a given time; and this is not unalterable. In proposition 2, Wittgenstein seemed to identify things, affairs, and objects. Here he says they are unalterable. But what can a thing or state of affairs be, if it is unalterable?

This leads to a most important matter underlying not only secular Positivism, but also many of the

later theories of religious language. The aim here will be to refute a fundamental flaw in empiricism, and the argument should be kept in mind all the way through to the end.

The standard forms of empiricism, surely Wittgenstein's, depend on a theory of images; and they usually add an Aristotelian process of abstraction in order to get concepts. The following texts support this assertion:

> 2.1 We picture facts to ourselves…. 2.13 A picture is a model of reality. 2.13 In a picture objects have the elements of the picture corresponding to them. 2.131 In a picture the elements of the picture are representatives of objects…. 4.01 A proposition is a picture of reality….a model of reality as we imagine it. 4.011 [Printed music does not seem to be a picture of the reality, the sound] and yet these sign languages prove to be pictures, even in the ordinary sense, of what they represent. 4.012…a R b strikes us as a picture. In this case the sign is obviously [!] a likeness of what is signified…. 4.016 [Hieroglyphics depict the facts they describe] and alphabetic script developed out of it without losing what was essential to depiction…. 4.06 A proposition can be true or false only in virtue of being a picture of reality.

Empiricism

Since this pictorial view is inherent in all empiricism, excepting only Berkeleyan subjective Idealism and pyrrhonian skepticism, it deserves the most careful consideration. Important as the theme is in philosophy, there is nothing more important for religious theories of language and knowledge, for it underlies the possibility of any and every theological sentence.

Other minor criticisms may surface on later pages, but here two fundamental objections demand attention: One has to do with the idea of picture, and a second with the idea of representation or correspondence. This second point, the " correspondence theory of knowledge," faces the insuperable objection that it disallows any knowledge of reality at all. Whatever reality may be, whether individuals like trees and rocks, or Platonic Ideas, or whatever, this theory provides us only with pictures of them. The object of knowledge is therefore a representation and not the reality itself. Since the mind contains only the picture and never the "thing," there is no possibility of knowing whether the representation is similar to the object or not. To recognize a similarity between two things, they must be compared, and hence both must be in the mind. But if the reality is in the mind, the picture with its similarity is useless. If the reality is not in the mind, the picture, so far as we know, is a picture of nothing. There is hardly any objection to empiricism more fundamental than this one. But there is another, not much less important, whose force seems to be less generally recognized.

Further quotations: "2.0141 A picture is a fact…. 2.151 Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture. 2.1511 *That* is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it."

After a number of other propositions in which pictures seem to include logical forms as well as spatial things, proposition 3.1431 reads, "The essence of a propositional sign is very clearly *seen* [my italics] if we *imagine* one composed of spatial objects (such as tables, chairs, and books) instead of written signs. Then the spatial arrangements of these things will express the sense of the proposition."

In these numbered propositions the idea of comparison is mentioned, but in no such way as to avoid the argument against all correspondence theories of knowledge. The other point, previously mentioned, has to do with the idea of images and their special arrangements. The importance of this may be emphasized by returning to something not previously quoted from Bertrand Russell. In *Logic and Knowledge* (R.C. Marsh, editor, 293), discussing Watson and Behaviorism, Russell wrote,

> There is a valid objection to the behavioristic view of language on the basis of the fact…[namely] the denial of images appears empirically indefensible…. If you try to persuade an ordinary uneducated person that she cannot call up a visual picture of a friend sitting in a chair…she will conclude that you are mad. (This statement is based upon experiment.)

Then he adds, "To 'think' of the meaning of a word is to call up images of what it means" (300).

To emphasize further the importance of this, we quote the source in Hume – though Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle said much the same thing. Hume put it this way:

> That idea of red, which we form in the dark, and that impression which strikes our eye in sunshine, differ only in degree, not in nature. That the case is the same with all our simple impressions…everyone may satisfy himself…by running over as many as he pleases.[2]

There are two objections to this Hume-Russell-Wittgenstein position. First, it is hard to understand Russell's assertion, "This statement is based on experiment." Neither Hume nor Russell could examine the "everyone" Hume mentions. Was Russell's experimentation limited to one woman sitting in a chair? At best it is an induction from questions asked of and answers received from a large sample of "ordinary uneducated persons." This is an induction; and the validity of induction is an indispensable element in scientific Positivism. But induction, unless it be complete induction, which is never the case in science, is always invalid. Many people have seen a hundred black crows without ever having seen an albino. Their induction that "All crows are black" is a mistake. Less persuasive, but equally applicable, is the induction by which a physicist formulates the law of the lever. One might believe that all levers "obey" the equation, but the induction does not guarantee it. As a matter of fact, whenever a physicist formulates a law, he uses several *a priori*, unsupported assumptions. Furthermore, this "whenever" is not based on an incomplete induction, but upon an analysis of laboratory method.

But second, and conclusively, induction, if it proves anything, proves the falsity of the empirical principle. Brand Blanshard reports one carefully made induction.[3] The present writer also, though not with mathematical accuracy, has obtained some percentages by questioning students over a period of twenty years or more. In a course on modern philosophy, when the class got to the chapter on Hume, he would ask, "Do you imagine red in the dark as Hume says you must?" and "Can you see in your mind an absent friend sitting in the chair before you?"

Over twenty years the number of those who answered no to those questions is about five percent. This is the albino crow that wrecks empirical ornithology. Further, among the ninety percent with visual imagery an interesting difference was reported. Some of them dreamed in technicolor, others only in black and white. Here, then, is imagery, but not the sort of imagery that Hume insisted everybody has.

Now, someone might suspect that a mistake had been made in every case within the five percent. Hardly likely; for this would give one hundred inexplicable mistakes. What further supports the conclusion that several people have no visual imagery are the answers to similar questions about auditory imagery. The experiments showed that ten to fifteen percent had none. Many more, at least fifty percent, had no gustatory or olfactory imagery. Tactual imagery came between auditory and olfactory. This is most convincing to the present writer, for he, too, cannot find any image of red almost as vivid as the red seen in sunlight. To put it accurately, he can find no image of red at all; and to suppose that he can "see" an absent friend is ludicrous.

This unimaginative position does not solve all the problems of language; but it will be the basis for rejecting every empirical theory of knowledge and will play a major role in defending the legitimacy of religious language. It entails a different metaphysics: a different view of what reality consists of, a different view of how one reality is related to another. But first there is more to consider in the Positivistic systems.

Ethics and Theology

What now follows will be in a sense desultory and unsystematic. The aim is to show how or that logical symbolism, which most people find exceedingly tedious, affects one's views on ethics and theology.

The *Tractatus* gives an early limitation on language: "3.221 Objects can only be *named*. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak *about* them: I cannot *put them into words*. Propositions can only say *how* things are, not *what* they are." Emil Brunner was later to say, If you talk *about* God, you are not talking about *God*.

When Wittgenstein also says, "4.001 The totality of propositions is language," he may be defining language, but at any rate he is asserting that Robert Burns did not make much use of language.

Many times Wittgenstein's remarks are the quintessence of wisdom; for example, "4.002…The tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated." Indeed, they are so complicated that one begins to hope for a perfect artificial language. In a logic class one day the instructor defined a term, using five key words. The first student who spoke showed by what he said that he had missed the significance of one of those five words. The word was further explained. Then in turn four other students showed how little they had understood each of the other four words. And this was in a college classroom, where they expected or should have expected a certain degree of preciseness. Imagine then how sloppy, how confused, how unintelligible ordinary conversation is.

But though this is a lesson all college students, and many college professors, should learn, did Wittgenstein mean no more? His previous lines are, "Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of thought beneath it because the outward form of the clothing" in the nineteenth century was not the bikini style of the late twentieth. But if it is *impossible*, not just usually but always how does one ever, even once, understand what another says, or where can one begin his search for logical form? Perhaps Wittgenstein's language here obscured his thought, for later he says, "4.116 Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be put into words can be put clearly." Wittgenstein does indeed limit what can be thought and what can be put into words, but at least, so it seems, some things can be thought and can be said clearly.

A puzzle arises when Wittgenstein acknowledges that some things can be "shown" but cannot be expressed (see 4.12-4.126). At that point the matter is quite technical; but later he extends the application: "5.62…What the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest." Here then is a *meaning*, and therefore a *thought* – for can a solipsist *mean* something without thinking it? – yet it is a thought that cannot be put in words. Admittedly, in 4.116 Wittgenstein did not say, "What can be thought can be said." Thus he escapes the obvious contradiction. But the puzzle remains that he has a clear thought that cannot be said. This is hard to think.

Wittgenstein follows this puzzle into the spheres of ethics and aesthetics, and into theology as well. Consider the following lengthy quotation with care.

> 6.41 The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen; in it no value exists – and if it did, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental….

> 6.42 And so it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics…6.421 It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words…. Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.

> 6.422 When an ethical law of the form, "Thou shalt…" is laid down, one's first thought is, "And what if I do not do it?" It is clear, however, that ethics has nothing to do with punishment or reward in the usual sense of the terms. So the question about the *consequences* of our action must be unimportant. At least those consequences should not be events…. There

must indeed be some kind of ethical reward and punishment but they must reside in the action itself….

6.4312 Not only is there no guarantee of the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say of its eternal survival after death, but…is not this eternal life itself as much a riddle as our present life?...

6.52 We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.

6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.

7. What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence.

A criticism of this passage forms a fitting conclusion for this section on Wittgenstein because it contains many of the difficulties the Positivists must face. There is no need to show that it conflicts with Christianity, though some items of contrast are profitable. It is more important to show that if "what we cannot speak about we must consign to silence," Wittgenstein should have spoken less.

In the first place and in the first sentence, it is hard to understand what the term *sense* means, and how anything can lie outside the world. One can understand an assertion that no value exists in the world; but if "the world is *all* that is the case," it is the case that there is no value. On Positivistic grounds there is no other world for value to exist in.

Perhaps Wittgenstein was not influenced by Albrecht Ritschl: He may have independently drawn similar conclusions from his study of Kant. Kant had indicated a realm of faith beyond the limits of pure reason – a transcendental world of God, freedom, immortality, and ethics. Ritschl developed this into a world of science that had no value, and a world of value that contained no truth. But at any rate, Ritschl had no qualms about speaking of values, value-judgments as he called them. Contrariwise, Wittgenstein said, "It is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics…. It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words."

The difficulty here is not that Wittgenstein has used the word *ethics* and implied that it is nonsense. Positivism is justified in asserting that some terms have no meaning. No one objects to identifying the words "snark" and "boojum" as nonsense. The difficulty is that Wittgenstein says much more than this: He actually makes ethical assertions. In 6.422 he gives the ethical proposition, "Ethics has nothing to do with reward or punishment in the usual sense of the terms…[but] there must indeed be some kind of ethical reward…in the action itself." But this Kantian view cannot serve within Logical Positivism. For the latter there simply are no propositions of ethics.

This inconsistency in Wittgenstein can be emphasized by a contrast with Christianity. The latter threatens eternal punishment for disobedience. Wittgenstein had said, "And what if I do not" keep the commandment? Christianity replies, You will be condemned to Hell. Now, who speaks the truth, Wittgenstein or the Bible? Well, if the gentleman wishes to claim truth for his proposition of ethics, he must renounce Positivism. Then, further, he must define his proposition that "ethics has nothing to do with punishment" such as Hell. To succeed in his defense, he will have to retract three-fourths of all he had said. Logical Positivism must remain ethically silent. This indeed is what Wittgenstein inconsistently does. Denying a future life, and having answered all possible scientific questions, "the problems of life remain completely untouched." Untouched, because there are no questions left, and this itself is the answer. "The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem." Therefore, murder, adultery, and theft must be consigned to silence.

1 Max Black, in *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus,"* 1964, remarks that 2.062 seems to conflict with 2.05.

2 *Treatise of Human Nature*, I, i, i.

3 Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, 1939, I, 260-263.

RUDOLF CARNAP

The motive force behind Logical Positivism was the twenty-five-hundred-year failure of philosophy to arrive at any settled conclusions. The constant discussions may have varied in some particulars, but the basic problems were the same and they remained unsolved. In contrast, the positive sciences commanded respect from the populace and agreement among its practitioners. The reason for this must be that science had discovered the proper method and philosophy had not. On this the Positivists were positive.

The differences between the two methods have been stated with great precision by Rudolf Carnap. There is no doubt that Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970) was a Logical Positivist. Surely Russell was not: He was always dabbling in metaphysical problems; he even defended some Platonic realities and wrote serious books on matters a good Positivist would never touch. Wittgenstein was closer to the strictly orthodox Vienna Circle; but he, too, evinced interest in non-empirical, "non-sayable" opinions. Carnap, however, was about as consistent an empiricist as one can hope to find. Although he began a fruitful literary career in 1923, this section will summarize only his 1932 article on "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language" (in *Logical Positivism*, A.J. Ayer, editor). The reason is, of course, that it states so clearly the anti-metaphysical arguments.

Metaphysics and Meaning

Through the centuries, opponents of metaphysics, he begins, have charged it with being false, uncertain, or sterile. Modern logic, Carnap believes, provides a more devastating refutation because it gives positive results in science and shows negatively that metaphysics is not so much false, uncertain, or sterile, as meaningless. The rules of language govern the formation of sentences; and therefore pseudo-sentences are such because they either contain a word that has no meaning or, if the words are all individually intelligible, they are put together in a counter-syntactical manner. Both these types of statements occur in metaphysics.

The reason some words can be meaningless, in spite of the fact that all words have been introduced into a language for the purpose of expressing something, is that words change their meanings in the course of history. In these changes sometimes words lose their earlier meaning without getting a new one. Examples would be *god, cause*, and *substance*. The meaningfulness of a word depends on two factors: (1) Its syntax or use must be fixed by the simplest form in which it can occur, for example, *x* is a *stone*. Then (2) the simplest sentence must satisfy a condition that can be expressed by four questions: (a) What is this simplest sentence deducible from, and what statements are deducible from it? (b) Under what conditions is the sentence true, and under what, false? (c) How is the sentence verified? (d) What is the meaning of the sentence?

To illustrate: *Arthropodes* in a sentence is deducible from "*x* is an animal, *x* has a segmented body, and *x* has jointed legs." If any of these other words – *segmented, legs* – is to be defined, the regress stops when we come to an observation or " protocol-sentence." In simpler language, the first definition consists in pointing at an object you can see. Thus the protocol sentence refers to the "given" (*das Gegebenes*), but, admits Carnap, there is no unanimity on what is given. Some say "sense qualities," others "total experiences," and others say "things." But we may still claim that a

word is significant only if the sentence is or may be reduced to a protocol sentence.

Suppose now that some primitive man pointed at a quadrangular shape, and invented a new word to denote this shape. Then, if a later philosopher should argue that *x*-ness always expresses itself in quadrangular form, but that *x*-ness, instead of being precisely quadrangularity, is a hidden quality or force that produces quadrangularity, Carnap would object that there is no evidence of such a hidden quality and that the word either means quadrangularity or nothing at all.

Basically this is the argument by which Logical Positivists show that metaphysics and theology are meaningless. Take the metaphysical word *principle*: that is, not an axiom of geometry or a general law of physics, but the highest principle of the world, such as Thales' water or Pythagoras' number. Under what conditions, Carnap asks, would it be true to say, "*x* is the principle of *y*"? The metaphysican replies: It is true if *y* arises out of *x*, or *y* exists in virtue of *x*. Now, sometimes an answer of this form is intelligible, as in a chemical combination or a botanical process. But the metaphysician does not mean an observable process. When he says that the world arises out of, or depends on, the absolute, he can give no criterion for testing his assertion, and therefore it is meaningless. *Arce* indeed had a meaning once upon a time. Water was at least visible, even if number was not. But though the word had a meaning long ago, it has now lost it, and though still in use, is meaningless.

Or take the word *God*. It has passed through three historical epochs. In mythology the gods meant visible, physical bodies on Mt. Olympus. One could go look for them to see whether or not they were there. In metaphysics God is not the object of any experience: He could not be pointed at; therefore, the word was meaningless. Theology stands midway between mythology and metaphysics. Its usage oscillates; and thus either it can be shown to be false by testing or else it is meaningless. The same analysis applies also to the *absolute*, the *infinite*, *being-in-itself*, and similar terms.

In addition to meaningless words, there are also meaningless sentences. Even when each word in itself has a distinct meaning, the syntax of a sentence may be impossible; for example, "Caesar is and," or " Caesar is a prime number." Carnap insists that such sentences are not false: They are meaningless, for only numbers, not men, can be either divisible or non-divisible. Many metaphysical sentences are like this in having intelligible words whose combination is syntactically impossible. Therefore, grammatical syntax must be supplemented by a logical syntax.

Carnap then gives a particularly striking example from Heidegger:

> What is to be investigated is being only, and nothing else;…nothing, solely being…. What about this nothing? Does nothing exist only because the not, *i.e.*, the negation exists? Or…does negation exist and the not exist only because the nothing exists?… We assert: the nothing is prior to the not…etc.[1]

Someone might answer, as Carnap acknowledges, that human knowledge is limited, and perhaps a higher being knows metaphysics and can reveal it to us. Carnap's reply is devastating: Whatever is unintelligible and meaningless cannot become meaningful, however revealed.

Heidegger is but one example, an extreme example; but Hegel is almost as bad. A great amount of the difficulty, not only in these two authors, is the transmutation of the copula *to be* into *existence* as a predicate. Kant disposed of this mistake, but people still say "I am" or "God is."

Science

The basic flaw that renders all metaphysics nonsense is the notion that there is a kind of knowledge inaccessible to empirical science. There are only three types of meaningful statements, or, better, only two main types. Tautologies are *ipso facto* true and their contradictories *ipso facto* false; but these "analytic" judgments say nothing about reality. Examples are the propositions of logic and

mathematics. All other meaningful statements are such because they can be verified by sensory experience. Thus terms such as *vitalism* or *causality*, and value-judgments as in ethics or aesthetics are all meaningless.

Since on this view only positive science produces truth, the role of philosophy is that of logical analysis. It eliminates nonsense, as just explained, and further analyzes and clarifies concepts. The reason metaphysics has influenced so many people is that it expresses a person's general attitudes toward life. But anyone who designates such a general attitude as a "world-and-life view" "blurs the difference between attitude and theory, a difference which is of decisive importance for our analysis" (79). To express one's attitude toward life, art is better than metaphysics and more honest: better because art is an adequate expression, and more honest because metaphysics uses language that gives the illusion of being theoretical. Metaphysicans are deluded; poets are not. Of all the arts, music is the best; for it is entirely free from reference to objects. Metaphysicans are musicians without musical ability. This condensation of Carnap's "Elimination of Metaphysics" is sufficient at this point to characterize the motivation of Logical Positivism. For a better understanding of the details that follow, and especially for a student's later evaluation of the movement, two or three theses may be picked out for consideration.

Very basically, Logical Positivism is an empirical philosophy. There is no world of Platonic Ideas, no *a priori* Kantian categories or innate forms of the mind. So far as mind is concerned, the tendency is toward Behaviorism. But at any rate, truth can be obtained only through sensory verification. The exact form of the verification principle varies somewhat from writer to writer; but all alike depend utterly on sensation.

Worthy of note also is the fact that Carnap's distinction between attitude and theory, a distinction he acknowledges to be of decisive importance for his analysis, has been adopted by several college textbooks on logic. One of them gives an excellent illustration. A banker, a lawyer, and a newspaper reporter were discussing Senator LaFollette. All three agreed that the Senator was a socialist. This is the theoretical truth. The banker and the lawyer believed that socialism is bad; the reporter thought it good. The reporter and the lawyer believed that LaFollette was honest and sincere; the banker thought he was a crook.

This is an interesting illustration, but it is far from proving that there is any difference at all between attitude and theory. The distinction in the illustration is that between the historical statement that LaFollette was a socialist and the evaluative or ethical statement that he was honest, or dishonest. One is historical theory, the other is ethical theory.

This criticism, of course, would not impress Carnap. Speaking as a Logical Positivist, Carnap is consistent, more or less, in considering as a theoretical truth the classification of the Senator as a socialist. But the classifications, *good*, *bad*, *honest*, *dishonest*, are personal attitudes. Such is Logical Positivism. Those, however, who reject empiricism, with its observational criterion, reject also the distinction between truth and attitude, because what the Positivists take for subjective attitude, the others take as true theoretical propositions. If they are not true theoretical propositions, then it is nonsense to say that Logical Positivism is good.

Now, finally, a note on protocol sentences and their ostensive sources. The beginning of meaning lies in pointing with the finger at a visible object. Only after pointing can language come into play. But if we can point at a cat or dog or tree, how can the meaning of *in, for, quickly, greater* be seen with the eyes? Not to mention the square root of minus one? Such grammatical and mathematical difficulties, plus the suspicious subjectivism of ethical norms, just might lead to the demise of Logical Positivism.

This is a good place to note another factor that could lead to the demise of Logical Positivism. In 1932-1933 Otto Neurath published an article in *Erkenntniss*, the English title of which is "Protocol Sentences."[2] This did not seem so dangerous to Neurath when he wrote it: In fact he thought he was advancing the Positivist system. Nonetheless, he knew he was criticizing Carnap. A few points from the article are selected here.

Neurath begins by acknowledging that even scientific terms are not wholly precise, for they are based on protocol sentences, and "these terms must be vague." The name "Otto," in "Otto is observing a thermometer," is vague and must eventually be replaced by mathematical formulas. A scientist, like everyone else, must begin with ordinary language and purify it by advancing to physicalistic ordinary language, in which process he will exclude many proscribed words. Then comes the physicalistic language of advanced science, free from metaphysical elements. But the language can be used only for *parts* of the special sciences. Other parts of any science book must use some of the lower language as well. The language of advanced science and ordinary language coincide primarily in arithmetic. "There is no way of taking conclusively established protocol sentences as the starting point of the sciences." We can eliminate metaphysics, but vague linguistic conglomerations always remain.

It is clear that Neurath wishes to eliminate metaphysics as much as Carnap does. The question is, Can Logical Positivism do so? If corrections of Carnap's view are needed, may not corrections of Neurath's view be needed, and so on until the corrected version is no longer Logical Positivism?

Neurath has doubts about Carnap's "*primitive* protocol language," discussion of which might lead younger men into metaphysical deviations: "we reject Carnap's thesis to the effect that protocol sentences are those 'which require no verification….'No sentence enjoys the *noli me tangere* which Carnap ordains for protocol sentences" (203).

The next subject will be the verification principle, its statement by A.J. Ayer, and its later modifications.

1 "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical analysis of Language," in *Logical Positivism*, Ayer, editor, 69.

2 In Ayer, *Logical Positivism*, 199*ff*.

A. J. AYER

Alfred Jules Ayer (1910-1989) in his Preface to *Language, Truth and Logic,* (1936) acknowledged his indebtedness to Russell, Wittgenstein, and Hume. Although he is closely allied with the Logical Positivists, and although W.T. Jones repeatedly classifies him as such, Ayer himself repudiates the classification and in several places emphasizes or at least mentions some points of disagreement. That he is in the main stream of language analysis, however, there can be no doubt. All propositions are either relations of ideas or matters of facts, as Hume said; the former are *a priori*, analytic tautologies, such as are found in logic and mathematics, and cannot be confuted by experience – they are simply our "determination to use symbols in a certain fashion"; whereas the latter are never certain, but only more or less probable, depending on the degree of verifying experience. "And in giving an account of the method of validation, I claim to have explained the nature of truth" (11).

The Preface itself states Ayer's basic disagreement with the Logical Positivists: "I adopt…a modified verification principle. For I require of an empirical hypothesis, not indeed that it should be conclusively verifiable, but that some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood" (11).

The Verification Principle

At this early point one may reply to an objection that some of his opponents have made. The strong verification principle, which these opponents also reject, at least plausibly distinguishes a true from a false proposition: But this weak verification principle would allow even a dream to be relevant to the truth of God's existence, or other metaphysical propositions equally obnoxious to Ayer. This objection fails because Ayer insists that there is no sensory observation that can be relevant to the existence of God and that theological propositions are devoid of meaning:

> If a putative proposition fails to satisfy this principle [of sensory verification], and is not a tautology, then I hold that it is metaphysical…neither true nor false but literally senseless…. The philosopher is not in a position to furnish "speculative truths…nor yet to pass *a priori* judgments upon the validity of scientific theories, but…his function is to clarify the propositions of science by exhibiting their logical relationships, and by defining the symbols which occur in them" [11].

It is to be noted that Ayer's rejection of metaphysics and theology depends on a combination of basic empiricism and a definition of symbols. Concerning a metaphysician Ayer asks, "Must he not begin, as other men do, with the evidence of his senses?" This, of course, is the point at issue, and a rhetorical question is a *petitio*:

> What valid process of reasoning can possibly lead him to the conception of a transcendent reality?… No statement which refers to a reality transcending the limits of all possible sensible experience can possibly have any literal significance…. The fruitlessness of attempting to transcend the limits of possible sense experience will be deduced, not from…the actual constitution of the human mind (as Kant did) but from the rule which determines the literal significance of language [19].

If metaphysics is simply bad grammar, one might ask how Plato, with his great literary skill, came to make metaphysical assertions. Ayer answers that our language (Greek as well as English) distinguishes between the thing itself and its various qualities. Therefore, we say *it has* these qualities. But the thing is really the totality of its appearances. Thus the metaphysician is deceived

into thinking that a noun must refer to a thing. The wrong grammatical assumption is that "to every word or phrase that can be the grammatical subject of a sentence, there must somewhere be a real entity corresponding" (35). And with justifiable sarcasm he refers to Heidegger's making "Nothing" the name of a reality. Propositions and universals are not real, and therefore the problems arising from them are fictitious.

To avoid such blunders, one must realize that philosophy is chiefly analytic, and never metaphysical:

> The philosopher…is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. He is concerned only with the way we speak about them. [For example,]…a material thing cannot be in two places at once. This looks like an empirical proposition, and is constantly invoked by those who desire to prove that it is possible for an empirical proposition to be logically certain. But a more critical inspection shows that it is not empirical at all, but linguistic. It simply records the fact that, as the result of certain verbal conventions, the proposition that two sense-contents occur in the same visual or tactual sense-field is incompatible with the proposition that they belong to the same material thing…. There is no logical reason why we should not so alter our definitions that the sentence "A thing cannot be in two places at once" comes to express a self-contradiction instead of a necessary truth [63].

The result is that two marbles cannot be in the same place simply because we decide to talk that way. There is nothing about marbles themselves that prevents their interpenetration. Any time we wish, we can define marbles as bodies that occupy the same place at the same time.

Definition

Ayer is not always so obviously absurd. He makes an interesting distinction between dictionary definitions and philosophic definitions. The former are synonyms, by which they assert that one symbol can be substituted for another. The philosophic definition of a symbol "in use" occurs "by showing how the statements in which it significantly occurs can be translated into equivalent statements which contain neither the definiendum itself nor any of its synonyms" (68). Here he refers to Russell's attempt to explain the meaning of " Scott was the author of *Waverley*." The "in-use" definitions bring to light the non-obvious complexity of ordinary sentences.

A better, a more fundamental, application of this type of definition aims to show that the *is* of existence is not the *is* of class inclusion. He writes: "The 'is' which occurs in the sentence, 'He is the author of that book,'" though its form is identical, is not "the same symbol as the 'is' which occurs in the sentence, 'A cat is a mammal.'" The reason they are different, says Ayer, is that "the first is equivalent to "He and no one else wrote that book," and the second to "The class of mammals contains the class of cats" (72). But the first of these sentences can also be translated, "the class Scott is included in the class author-of-*Waverley* and the class author-of-*Waverley* is included in the class Scott." If anyone argues that Scott and *Waverley* are not classes, the reply is that a logic which allows null classes cannot prohibit Sir Walter from being in a class by himself. Thus Ayer's use of a transitive verb, *wrote*, instead of the logical copula is certainly not the only analysis possible, and by many philosophers is considered a worse one.

Empiricism

In chapter 4 Ayer makes it clear that empiricism has no place for any *a priori*, and therefore no place for any universal or necessary proposition, other than tautologies. Arithmetic and geometry make no assertions concerning the real world or physical space. John Stuart Mill had argued that mathematical formulas were generalizations based on extremely wide inductions, so wide in fact that there arose the mistaken belief that they were universally and necessarily true. For Mill they were only highly probable.

Ayer rejects Mill but not, of course, to accept Kant. There are indeed *a prioris*, but no synthetic *a prioris*. There are also inductions, but not in Mill's sense. True, the psychological process of learning mathematics is inductive, in the sense that the student, and particularly the originator of new formulae, first makes many blunders, considers already established truths, and finally stumbles into something new, correct, and useful. But logically the formulation does not depend on experience, nor does it give us any factual information. Mathematics has no empirical verification.

One of Ayer's examples is a triangle. If we most carefully measure a visible triangle and find its angles to be a minute fraction less than 180 degrees, we never count it as a negative case in induction. "We say that we have measured wrongly, or, more probably, that the triangle we have been measuring is not Euclidean" (97). In the next paragraph he continues, "The same thing applies to the principles of formal logic. In other words, the truths of logic and mathematics are analytic propositions or tautologies" (100). And here he continues with an argument against Kant's *a priori* synthetic judgments.

Although these analytic principles have no factual content, "They do enlighten us by illustrating the way in which we use certain symbols…calling attention to the implications of a certain linguistic usage…indicating the convention which governs our usage of the words 'if and 'all'" (104-105).

Logic

This view that logic is a convention leads to the conclusion that "every logical proposition is valid in its own right. Its validity does not depend on its being incorporated in a system" (108). Here a difficulty begins to emerge. If each logical principle is so independent of any system, would it not be possible to assert, not only contradiction without subalternation, but also subalternation without contradiction? If each principle of logic is independent of every other, could we not have universal affirmatives without contraposition, or vice versa? *E* might be contradictory of *I* without being the contrary of *A*. And, further, if all these principles are merely tautologies and conventions, cannot we discard them all and replace them by other distinctly different ones? What Ayer says of geometrics surely applies to his view of logics: "Insofar as they are all free from contradiction, they are all true" (111). But why must they be free from contradiction? The law of contradiction is just a convention, and are we not free to abandon it? If "they simply record our determination to use words in a certain fashion" (114), why cannot we determine otherwise? Ayer tries to answer this in his next sentence: "We cannot deny them without infringing the conventions which are presupposed by our very denial, and so falling into self-contradiction." But does this not make the law of contradiction something more necessary than a convention? Does not the very possibility of tautology depend on the law of contradiction? Deny contradiction – and its obverse, the law of identity – and tautologies cannot occur. But if this be so, logical principles cannot be independent of each other: they must form a *system* of obversion, contraposition, transitivity, and so on.

Ayer often does not treat logic as a mere convention. In his discussion of the confirmation of a scientific law, he notes that a negative experiment can be taken to falsify the law, or the law can be maintained by supposing that the experiment failed to meet certain requisite conditions, or "that our negative observation was hallucinatory. And in that case we must [do so and so]. Otherwise we shall be maintaining incompatible hypotheses. And this is the one thing we may not do" (133-134). Yet this is precisely what we may do, if logic is a mere convention.

Once again, in discussing the alterations of the laws of physics, he says:

> Although we acknowledge that certain standards of evidence ought always to be observed in the formation of our beliefs, we do not always observe them. In other words, we are not always rational. For to be rational is simply to employ a

self-consistent accredited procedure in the formation of all one's beliefs [144].

Is this simply a convention as to how we shall use the word *rational*? And what about his phrase "ought always"? How can Ayer's conventionalism provide a basis for a universally (at all times and for all persons) obligatory moral duty? Well, it cannot; for on the next page he adds,

> we define a rational belief as one which is arrived at by the methods which we now consider reliable. There is no absolute standard of rationality…. If in the future we were to adopt different methods, then beliefs which are now rational might become irrational from the standpoint of these new methods. But the fact that this is possible has no bearing on the fact that these beliefs are rational now.

On the contrary, it has a great bearing on the present. No doubt it is true that alterations in the positive operational laws of physics would have no bearing on the present standards of rationality. If a certain equation is the best we can do now, there is no necessary violation of rationality in later accepting an equation now judged to be extremely queer. But when Ayer says that there is no absolute standard of rationality, his words go beyond the present positive laws of science; they include the law of contradiction, for this law has *historically* been considered to be the basic test of rationality. Ayer, of course, insists that present logic is a convention that may well be replaced in the future. But if I believed now that next year, or next century, inconsistency and self-contradiction would be rational, it would have a tremendously destructive bearing on my belief that these laws are rational now.

Ethics

A few lines back Ayer imposed on us an "ought always." This is a normative demand. To be sure, most people would not regard it as a moral precept, for present society seems to have restricted immorality to murder and thievery. Nevertheless, Ayer has imposed on us a universal value judgment which, since it is intended to govern our conduct, can only be classed with morality, aesthetics, and axiology in general. The question now is whether or not his theory of ethics allows him to do so.

In chapter 6 Ayer explains his "radical empiricist thesis" as it bears on ethics, aesthetics, and theology. Many people hold ethical norms to be genuine synthetic propositions that do not predict the future course of our sensations, and that therefore ethics cannot be empirical. To this Ayer replies that insofar as value judgments are significant, they are ordinary scientific statements of sociology or psychology; and insofar as they are not scientific, they are not significant but are only expressions of emotion.

Previous theories of ethics have greatly confused four separate problems. One problem is the definition of ethical terms, or at least the possibility of such definitions. For Ayer, this and this alone can constitute a philosophy of ethics. But besides definitions, writers on ethics have often described moral phenomena. This, however, is sociology and not ethics. Third, many writers have included exhortations. But these are not propositions, and cannot therefore be included in ethics. There is a fourth type of sentence, namely, "actual ethical judgments." This fourth division Ayer hardly explains at all. Without having "yet determined how they should be classified," he insists that "they are certainly neither definitions nor comments upon definitions, nor quotations"; for which reason "we may say decisively that they do not belong to ethical philosophy" (151).

Ayer rejects both the subjectivist and the utilitarian reduction of ethical to non-ethical terms. The basis for this rejection is ordinary English usage. These two ethical theories are both incorrect analyses of our existing ethical notions. "In our language, statements which contain ethical symbols are not equivalent to statements which express psychological propositions, or indeed empirical propositions of any kind" (155).

Here, as frequently, a reader is puzzled by Ayer's use of common English to test a theory, when he so strenuously objects to common English usage in theology.

The absolutists are right in opposing the reduction of ethical to empirical concepts. They are right when they say that ethical concepts are unanalyzable. But their reasons, motives, and implications are bad. Ethical concepts are unanalyzable because they are pseudo-concepts. To say, "you acted wrongly in stealing the money," merely means "you stole the money." In adding that this action is wrong, "I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it…. 'Stealing money is wrong'…has no factual meaning…expresses no proposition" (159). Others may have the same or different feelings about theft: The words are "purely emotive...they have no objective validity whatever."

In fact, according to Ayer, no one ever disputes about moral values. What occurs in ethical discussions are disputes about empirical facts:

> When someone disagrees with us…we do not attempt to show by our argument that he has the "wrong" ethical feeling…. What we attempt to show is that he is mistaken about the facts in the case…the agent's motives…the effects… special circumstances…. As the people with whom we argue have generally received the same moral education as ourselves…our expectation [that we can convince him by the facts] is usually justified. But if our opponent happens to have undergone a different process of moral "conditioning" from ourselves, so that, even when he acknowledges all the facts, he still disagrees…then we abandon the attempt to win him by argument…we finally resort to mere abuse [159*ff*.].

Of course, Ayer means that metaphysicians and theologians finally resort to abuse. Naturally, non-religious authors never resort to abuse.

Well, we gladly acknowledge that Ayer does not resort to abuse; and we also follow his argument to a point beyond that at which he stops. For if the condemnation of theft and murder cannot be rationally justified, Ayer's objection to them is mere personal, subjective emotion. Ayer, or at least men older than he, in England and the United States, were indeed socially conditioned to have feelings of distaste for murder. But many younger men and women have not had this moral education and hence have no feelings against the murder of innocent unborn human beings.

The fairly widespread moral uniformity of the last century or so has disappeared. Public education and governmental action have tended to eradicate Christian morality. But against those who still oppose murder and advocate capital punishment, Ayer has no rational argument. He has simply a humanistic emotion.

However, there is something still deeper. Ayer has a feeling that one "ought always" to avoid self-contradiction. But his emotional view of normative judgments and his logical, tautological, conventionalism robs his feelings of all authority for anyone else. The present writer acknowledges that Ayer, quoted in the concluding footnote, does not want logic to be "entirely arbitrary." However, even this pious wish would leave the law of contradiction fifty percent arbitrary.

Metaphysics

The next step is to show how Ayer, by language analysis, solves some particular metaphysical problems. Descartes and others had been troubled concerning their own personal existence, and more so by the existence of others. A similar, indeed the identical problem, concerns the existence of a common world. On his phenomenalistic position Ayer agrees that there are no objects whose existence is indubitable. Even propositions describing the contents of our sensations are only probable hypotheses. There is indeed a given, a datum, *ein Gegebenes*, namely, the content of sense experience; but the description of this content is only probable.

Any question as to whether sense contents are mental or physical is not an empirical question, but *a*

priori. The realistic theory with its subject-act-object is not verifiable. A given sense content is experienced by a particular subject only in the sense that some sense contents are related to others. There is no substantial ego or object. To say a sense content exists means merely that it occurs. It were better to use the term *occurrence* rather than *existence* so as to avoid treating sense contents as if they were material things. Therefore, sense contents are neither mental nor physical. These two terms can apply only to logical constructions out of sense contents. A construction may be either physical or mental, but its elements are neither.

At this point it is hard to resist the temptation of noting that Ayer's sense content is as mysterious as Spinoza's substance. The latter was both mental and physical; Ayer's is neither. But what is a sense content, what is an experience, if not mental? And how can a logical construction be a physical object?

Well, that question is easily answered: We simply use that kind of language:

> When we refer to an object as a logical construction out of sense contents, we are not saying that it is actually constructed out of these sense contents or that the sense contents are in any way parts of it, but merely expressing, in a convenient if somewhat misleading fashion, the syntactical fact that all sentences referring to it are translatable into sensations referring to them…. It should be clear also that there is no philosophical problem concerning the relationship of mind and matter, other than the linguistic problems of defining certain symbols which denote logical constructions in terms of symbols which denote sense-contents [190-192].

Bridging the gap between mind and matter is a fictitious problem, arising out of the senseless metaphysical concept of substance:

> For, roughly speaking, all that we are saying when we say that the mental state of a person *A* at a time *t* is a state of awareness of a material thing *X*, is that the sense-experience which is the element of *A* occurring at time *t* contains a sense-content which is an element of *X*, and also certain images which define *A*'s expectation of the occurrence in suitable circumstances of certain further elements of *X*, and that this expectation is correct; and what we are saying when we assert that a mental object *M* and a physical object *X* are causally connected is that, in certain conditions, the occurrence of a certain sort of sense-content, which is an element of *M*, is a reliable sign of the occurrence of a certain sort of sense-content, which is the element of *X*, or vice versa [192-193].

Now to make some comments, the subjectivism of Berkeley and the absolute idealism of Hegel, in both of which the fundamental reality is mind or spirit, have a degree of plausibility. Neither of these philosophers based his view on mere words or linguistic usage. Berkeley very pointedly invited us to pull aside the curtain of words to behold the fair world of ideas. But what can we see in the terms Ayer has just used: awareness, sense-content, images, expectation, and especially, experience? What can we see but words, words, words?

Ayer Changes His Mind

In 1946 Ayer republished his work with a long Introduction in which he detailed several changes in his thought. Some of these are trivial replies to still more trivial objections. Of slightly more importance are a few paragraphs on his verification principle. By noting that the sense-content necessary to verify an empirical statement may be any one of a great number of types, and never precisely one occurrence or one type, he avoids the charge that his principle is too restrictive. On the other hand, he would not have his principle so little restrictive that any indicative statement whatever could be taken as meaningful. How he balances these, it is not necessary to explain here. He also points out that the verifying statement need not be a part of the meaning of the statement verified. His example is that blood on my coat can be evidence that I committed a murder, but blood on my coat is not a part of the definition of murder. None of this greatly alters his original position, and he continues immediately to repeat that the existence of a deity can in no way be verified (15), and is therefore

meaningless.

What is of more importance is his acknowledgment that "the word ' meaning' is commonly used in a variety of senses, and I do not wish to deny that in some of these senses a statement may properly be said to be meaningful even though it is neither analytic nor empirically verifiable" (15). But this meaning, he insists, could not be "literal" or "factual" meaning. Not only so, but "Furthermore, I suggest that it is only if it is literally meaningful, in this sense, that a statement can properly be said to be either true or false" (15-16). Perhaps an example might be that " God exists" *means* the speaker is stupid.

Of fundamental importance, however, are the next four sentences. After having insisted that only literal meaning can be true or false, Ayer continues, "Thus, while I wish the principle of verification itself to be regarded, not as an empirical hypothesis, but as a definition, it is not supposed to be entirely arbitrary. It is open to anyone to adopt a different criterion of meaning…. Nevertheless, I think that, unless it satisfied the principle of verification, it would not be capable of being understood in the sense in which either scientific hypotheses or common-sense statements are habitually understood" (16). The second half of this disjunction does not seem to be the case, and the first half means merely that a theological doctrine is not a differential equation.

In all, a development of Ayer's thought is not very evident in this Introduction to his second edition. But what was not so clear in 1946 became more clear in the *Logical Positivism* of 1959. To quote:

> Why should this [verification principle] be accepted [as a convention]? The most that has been said is that metaphysical statements do not fall into the same category as the laws of logic, or as scientific hypotheses,…or any other common sense descriptions of the "natural" world. Surely it does not follow that they [that is, metaphysical statements] are neither true nor false, still less that they are nonsensical. No, it does not follow. Or, rather, it does not follow unless one makes it follow. The question is whether one thinks the difference between metaphysics and common sense or scientific statements to be sufficiently sharp for it to be useful to underline it in this way [15-16].

Is not this a total surrender of his original position? Something more along this line comes in the following section on Feigl.

HERBERT FEIGL

Herbert Feigl (1902-1976) was a thorough-going Logical Positivist who recognized the ineradicable cleavage between his own view and that which accommodates ethics, religion, and a life after death. Whether his language is more sympathetic than his "attitude," it is at least as clear as anyone could wish.

In his *Logical Empiricism* Feigl wrote:

> Probably the most decisive division among philosophical attitudes is the one between the worldly and the other-worldly types of thought. Profound differences in personality and temperament express themselves in the ever-changing forms these two kinds of outlook assume. Very likely there is here an irreconcilable divergence. It goes deeper than disagreement in doctrine; at bottom it is a difference in basic aim and interest. Countless frustrated discussions and controversies since antiquity testify that logical argument and empirical evidence are unable to resolve the conflict. In the last analysis this is so because the very issue of the jurisdictive power of the appeal to logic and experience (and with it the question of just what empirical evidence can establish) is at stake.[1]

This is about as clear-sighted and as unbiased as a Logical Positivist can be. Perhaps his phrase "The appeal to logic and experience" betrays a suggestion that whereas Logical Positivists use both, theologians use neither. Of course, theologians use logic, even if they reject experience. The words "personality and temperament," however, are unbiased, for they apply equally to both parties. The term "attitude" may beg the question, for to modern logicians it often means a non-intellectual, perhaps emotional, and at any rate non-cognitive state of mind, rather than an intellectual adherence to certain normative propositions. Feigl's opponents will repudiate the assumption that there are differences "deeper than…doctrine," for "aim and interest" are doctrine, too. They are not to be sought outside the universe of truth and falsehood. Nevertheless, no one could be more unbiased and perceptive than Feigl when he says, "the question of just what empirical evidence can establish is at stake."

Feigl is indeed very honest. In the following paragraph he says:

> There will always be those who find this world of ours, as cruel and deplorable as it may be in some respects [and remember Feigl had a slight brush with Hitler], an exciting, fascinating place to live in…. And there will always be those who look upon the universe of experience and nature as an unimportant or secondary thing in comparison with something more fundamental and more significant.

Here Feigl does not even exaggerate, as A.J. Carlson was wont to do in his attacks on revelational theology. If Feigl made a false step here, it was in suspecting that the world in some respects is *cruel* and *deplorable*. These are words that have no meaning for the Positivists. Ethical terms have no empirical basis and are therefore nonsense.

Unfortunately, because inconsistently, Feigl further contrasts men and movements that have "respect for the facts of experience, and open-mindedness" with others who are "more impatient…and tender-minded" (326). The sentiment is polite and gentle enough; but his theory makes such evaluations impossible. However, he must be allowed to get on with his argument.

In fact, he is harder on those who more or less agree with him than he is on metaphysicans and theologians. Some on his side of the great divide are radical reductionists: Organisms are nothing but machines; mind is *nothing but* matter; matter is *nothing but* a cluster of sensations; good and evil are

nothing but projections of our likes and dislikes. Feigl's Logical Empiricism considers all these to be "reductive fallacies." He will reject "nothing but," as well as "something more," and accept "what is what." Artificial reductions and wishful thinking must both go (326-327).

On this principle philosophy asks two chief questions: What do you mean? and How do you know? Answering these questions will indeed aid scientific sociology and politics, but the primary aim of philosophy is not the construction of a worldview nor a vision of a way of life. Philosophy concerns itself with consistency, testability, adequacy, precision, and objectivity. This concern has already rid us of magical, animistic, and mythological explanations; the remains of metaphysics and theology must now be swept away.

Language and Confusion

These unsuccessful methods thrive on verbal confusion. Therefore, phraseology about "absolute space" and "absolute time" must be shown to be devoid of factual meaning. The Behaviorists have already alerted us that the scientific content of psychology can be formulated in physical language so that mentalistic terminology is an illusion. Further progress in every science will similarly depend on distinguishing the functions of language.

Language has six types of meaning, divided in two groups of three each: *Cognitive* meanings are purely formal, logico-arithmetical, or factual; and *non-cognitive* meanings are pictorial, emotional, or volitional. Many metaphysical theories result from the erroneous presumption that factual meanings are present in purely emotive appeals or in formally correct grammatical structure. Logical Empiricism is primarily concerned with *cognitive* meaning. The meaning of words consists in the way they are used. The definition of a word amounts to a statement of the rule according to which we decide to employ the term. Finally all terms must be reduced to a small number of basic terms, and these must be immediately connected with experience. The terminal step, therefore, is *ostensive* definition.

The purely formal terms of logic and mathematics, of course, have no ostensive definition. They are defined only by relating them to each other. Therefore, logic and mathematics have no factual content. They are pure symbolism.

The important thing is to understand the criterion of factual meaningfulness. Reference to experience, the ostensive element, is the key.

> A sentence is factually meaningful only if we are in principle capable of recognizing such states of affairs as would either validate or invalidate the sentence. If we cannot possibly conceive of what would have to be the case in order to confirm or disconfirm an assertion we would not be able to distinguish between its truth and its falsity [334].

There must be a difference capable of observational testing.

The term *metaphysics* is elastic, and all sorts of problems have been discussed under its name. They are not all meaningless. Speculative cosmology, derived by extrapolation from observational evidence, can be factually meaningful. Examples are the heat-death of the universe, the origin of life, and the future path of evolution. But though not necessarily meaningless, these matters are so vague and uncertain that the guesses are apt to remain barren and can therefore be considered as the risky, disreputable extreme of science.

Deductive, rationalistic metaphysics, however, is completely devoid of factual meaning. Intuitive metaphysics confuses having an experience with knowing something about it. Transcendental metaphysics, an attempt to uncover the basic categories of reality, or speculations about the "absolute" generally contain an ample measure of "absolutely" untestable pseudo-propositions. Real science has progressed beyond the ideas of absolute time and space, substance, numbers as real

entities, causes and effects, vital forces and entelechies. All these are meaningless.

Induction

After the question, What do we mean? comes the question, How do we know? How can a truth-claim be justified on the basis of observation? This is not a question of psychology. Psychology itself is a science, a system of truth-claims, and therefore stands in need of justification. Epistemology, on the other hand, has to do not with origin and temporal development, but with logical structure and empirical validation.

It is possible to oversimplify the observational criterion of truth. Very few statements can be validated by direct observation. Most of knowledge is very indirect. This constitutes the problem of justifying the principle of induction and probability. It is a difficult problem. "All attempts to 'justify' inductive inference on rational, empirical, intuitive, or probabilistic grounds have turned out to be utter failures" (341). Induction and probability must assume that the observations give fair samples of the phenomenon under study. Yet this assumption has no empirical basis.

Feigl offers a startling solution to this problem. " Logical Empiricism cuts the Gordian Knot by bluntly asking the question, 'What can *justification* possibly mean here?'" There are only two conceivable answers: deductive proof or inductive evidence. "The 'great problem of induction, 'therefore, consisted in the impossible demand to justify the very principles of all justification" (341). The principle of induction, to be sure, is not a piece of knowledge, but a rule of procedure. It is therefore a tautology. Thus we are able to escape Hume's skepticism and all animal faith. "The procedure of induction, therefore, far from being irrational, defines the very essence of rationality" (342).

At this point a professor of philosophy cannot resist the temptation to change from exposition to criticism. One criticism is: If evidence is identical to justification, all generalizations are *ipso facto* justified. A person who had studied American history only so far as 1959 could, in 1976, conclude that no American president has ever been a Roman Catholic. This is, of course, just another example of a white crow. No doubt it is true to say that no president before 1960 was a Catholic; but this is a "complete" induction, that is, a deduction, such as never occurs in science. Science always operates by means of incomplete induction; and clearly these do not justify universal propositions.

Then, too, if induction is a tautology and a rule of procedure, someone other than Feigl has an equal right to choose another tautology and a different rule of procedure. There is no observational, ostensive, or factual compulsion to adopt one rule rather than another. They are all purely formal and stand as equals before the judge. If, indeed, Feigl's criterion produces certain results, another person who has no interest in those results can reject results and criterion together. What is more, the results may be accepted without accepting the premises, for the same conclusion may be deduced from differing sets of premises. In Yosemite the ranger will show the tourist a series of clay models exhibiting the stages in the formation of Half Dome and the Merced Valley. Now, if conditions were such as those depicted in the first model, and if the processes were such as those depicted in the succeeding models, the result might indeed be Half Dome. But Half Dome does not necessitate either the processes or the original topography. Thus Feigl's choice of induction remains Feigl's choice; and for the previous reason it is a bad choice.

Logical Empiricism aims to rid us of metaphysical absurdities and meaningless terms. That there are such and that we should rid ourselves of them is beyond question. But whether the particular language analysis of Logical Empiricism succeeds is a different question. Feigl next mentions the traditional issues of "the reality of the external world" and "the existence of other minds." When

phenomenalists and subjective idealists appeal to experience, Feigl stresses how vague the word *experience* is. One would think that Logical Empiricism would have an exceptionally clear concept of experience. Feigl then dismisses subjective idealism with the rhetorical question, somewhat reminiscent of Dr. Johnson, "Any need to emphasize how absurd that is?" "Metaphysical realism" fares no better. But if so, how can "Empirical Realism" avoid some impossibilities? Was not modern metaphysical realism empirical? Feigl replies,

> The term "real" is employed in a clear sense and usually with good reason in daily life and science to designate that which is located in space-time and is a link in the chains of causal relations…. The reality, in this sense, of rocks and trees, of stars and atoms, of radiations and forces, of human minds and social groups, of historical events and economic processes, is capable of empirical test [342].

The paragraph adorned with this fine literary sentence merits scrutiny. First, it is doubtful that the term *real* is clearly conceived in daily life, or even in science. Rather, it seems like a word which language analysis might exclude as meaningless. As for daily life, a billion people, Christians, Muslims, Jews, and some others, regularly say that God is real. Feigl can maintain that this is meaningless; but he cannot deny that it is common usage. Therefore, daily life does not restrict the term *real* to space-time objects of experience. Furthermore, Feigl should not attribute to it any position as a link in the chain of causal relations; for only a few pages back he had classified cause-effect relations with several other "obscure faculties and mythical powers [which] have gradually disappeared from respectable science" (338). Then, too, a good section of "daily life" is not apt to assert that the human mind is extended in space, for most people are not Behaviorists. But perhaps the most bothersome point in the paragraph is his acceptance of the thesis, "The only meaningful way to speak about things is in terms of what they are knowable as." The thesis itself may be true: It is inherent not only in Berkeleyan idealism, but also in Cartesianism (which is not "replete with pictorial and emotional appeals"). But though the thesis be true, it hardly accords with the rest of what Feigl says. On an empirical basis the thesis results in idealism; on a Platonic basis it results in the rational realism of suprasensible Ideas. These two, however, are precisely what Feigl rejects.

Ethics and Logic

From among the several other matters that Feigl discusses the present study will conclude with two: logic and ethics – in reverse order. The previous section on Wittgenstein exposed some of his ethical difficulties. Let us now see what Feigl can do.

The term *ought* is irreducible and is the irreducible directive component of moral value judgments. Moses would hardly have agreed with this; but we may accept it as the position of Logical Positivism. Feigl explicates:

> An ethical imperative like the Golden Rule simply means: "Would that everybody behaved" thus and thus. This sentence, having its accent in the emotive appeal, could not possibly be deduced from a knowledge of facts only; it is neither true nor false…. [Any other view] dogmatically proclaimed or merely abstractly assumed…involves confusions [354-355].

Of course, there can be a factual, empirical, decidable debate as to whether certain means will produce certain ends. But as Dewey said, there is no final end.[2] Like Dewey, Feigl confines ethics to the use of "leading standards, thoroughly empirical, to be sure, in the light of which we evaluate the mutual adjustment and harmonization of ends and means." But the choice of an end, it is clear, remains a meaningless emotive device for the direction of attitudes. "The ever-present possibility of asking the question, 'But is this really good?' shows that no descriptively delimited locus of valuableness forces its acceptance upon us as an ultimate criterion" (356). Any other opinion "manifests a not fully

liberated, pre-scientific type of mind."

But suppose I choose as my end the cultivation of a not fully liberated pre-scientific type of mind? Feigl wants "no other standards than those prescribed by human nature and by our own insights in the possibilities of improving human nature" (356). But my human nature and insight shows that the preservation of snail-darters is better than any TVA power station on the Tennessee River. That is why the savage, pre-scientific mentality of the thirteenth-century Highlanders in Scotland is so superior to the degenerate minds of Logical Positivists.

Feigl can fulminate all he wants: "a truly empirical study of human nature and social conduct discloses a considerable common denominator in at least the basic needs of all individuals living in the context of cooperation and mutual dependence" (356). Well, hardly. First, there is no empirical test of a "need." Second, the ideals and desires of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Logical Positivists are utterly incompatible. They have no common ethical principles at all. Did not Feigl himself in his opening paragraph acknowledge the "irreconcilable divergence" between secularists and religionists? Nonetheless, here, thirty pages later, he suggests that we ought (?) to develop "genuinely kind and altruistic attitudes." But this is only his emotional, pre-scientific attitude. And while a proper moral attitude must be pre-scientific, not every pre-scientific attitude is moral – altruistic attitudes, for instance.

Feigl himself half acknowledges this, for instead of ascertaining inductively the majority desire of all people, he requires a Logical Positivistic elite to impose its views of humanity on the backward pre-scientifics. Thus, the methods of torture used by the Communists "may nevertheless be justified on the basis of the expected results of the new measures for the totality of mankind" (357). Heaven preserve us!

The final point of criticism is Feigl's view of logic. If there is one thesis that permeates Logical Positivism it is the purely formal, analytical, tautological character of logical and mathematical propositions. Otherwise we would have to soar in the Platonic empyrean, like a Kantian dove beyond the resistance of air where progress is illusory. Says Feigl:

> The advocates of the unity of science…emphasize the distinction between the formal sciences (logic and mathematics) and the factual sciences. [In logic] the main progress…has depended on …the elaboration of the symbolic machinery of mathematical logic and the semantical and syntactical analyses of its meaning and structure…. The rules of deduction belong to the internal regulative mechanism of a consistent language…. Logical rules thus guide us in the transition from premises to conclusions…. The theorems or laws of logic are analytic sentences….The law of non-contradiction, for example, is inescapably and infallibly true as long as we agree to mean by a "sentence" an expression which is either true or false…[345-346].

So far, all is clear. The laws of logic are analytic tautologies. But immediately, to avoid a difficulty, Feigl makes an astounding admission that measures nine on the Positivists' Richter scale:

> This view of the nature of logical laws has been criticized as conventionalistic. It is said to assert that logical laws are a matter of arbitrary decree concerning the use of symbols. Obviously enough [and here Feigl admits the criticism], from a purely formal (syntactical) point of view a system of logic is just one calculus among an indefinite number of others. And yet [as the first tremor announces the imminent earthquake] we cannot speak of alternate *logics* in exactly the same sense in which we speak of alternate geometries. The uniqueness of logic seems to depend on its purpose in the use of language: As long as we wish our language to use unambiguous and consistent designation rules [that is, as long as we wish to speak intelligently and intelligibly] we simply must have [the law of contradiction].

With this *must* Logical Positivism collapses into debris, and in the settling dust we read, "Whatever calculus…we may find adequate for this or that scientific purpose, our *determination* to employ symbols with constant meanings *necessitates* [my italics] the retention of a *yes-or-no* logic somewhere as, so to speak, the ultimate court of appeal" (347). Through this dust – this

"determination," this "necessitates" and this "yes-or-no" – we can see the image of God in man, the *Logos* who enlightens every man who comes into the world. Logical Positivism cannot possibly be consistent.

[1] *Living Schools of Philosophy*, Dagobert Runes, editor, 1956, 325-367.

[2] Compare Gordon H. Clark, *Dewey*, 1960.

THE LATER WITTGENSTEIN

The *Philosophical Investigations*,[1] *The Blue and Brown Books*, as well as the less technical parts of the *Philosophical Grammar*, are as impossible to summarize as the *Tractatus*. There is also a difficulty in evaluating them, but a difficulty of a different sort. The *Tractatus* can, without much controversy, be adjudged profound; but the *Investigations* and *The Blue and Brown Books* often give the impression of triviality. This harsh judgment may anger some devotees of Wittgenstein, but it is not beyond possibility that Wittgenstein himself might have agreed. The reason is that in these volumes he investigates numerous phenomena and quirks of language. Nearly all are interesting; but it is hard to see that all are profound. Even some that are suggestive seem to lead nowhere. And the author admits as much.

The Preface of the *Philosophical Investigations* states,

> After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination [ix].

Philosophical Investigations

Evidence of this comes in the first few pages. Wittgenstein begins with a quotation from Augustine. It would be well to consider this quotation simply as a theory of language Wittgenstein wishes to discuss, rather than as Augustine's theory.[2] The theory is a very crude one, which Wittgenstein expresses thus: "the individual words in language name objects….every word has a meaning. The meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands." Embedded in this description there seems to be the assumption that the "object for which the word stands" is a physical object, such as a rock or tree. Certainly this is far from the view of Augustine, who was not "thinking primarily of nouns like 'table,' 'chair,' 'bread,' and of people's names…" (§10). There is no objection, however, to discussing the theory itself, divorced from any historical connection.

Wittgenstein now imagines a primitive language suitable to a builder and his assistant. The language contains words such *as stones, beams, slabs,* and not much else: "Conceive this as a complete primitive language," says Wittgenstein (§2). The builder yells, "Slab!" and his assistant brings him one. In a moment Wittgenstein will ask whether "Slab!" is a word or a sentence. Awaiting his answer, one may surmise that if "Slab" is a word, it is not even a word. A language of three nouns is not a language. The sounds would have no meaning. At the very least, it would be necessary to say, "That thing there is a slab." But if "Slab!" is a sentence, as it must be, an elliptical sentence, then we could never "conceive this as a complete primitive language." Even the most primitive language would have, not only other imperatives, but also several indicative verbs. Too often Wittgenstein proceeds on a premise the reader cannot accept.

A page or so later Wittgenstein expands this language to cover the needs of a shopkeeper (§8). There will be numerals, the names of some colors, and, what is fatal to the original complete language, the words *there, this,* and *is*.

A reader is most likely to say to himself, these are not two different languages; in fact, neither one is a language; they are parts of a more inclusive language. But Wittgenstein answers,

Do not be troubled by the fact that languages (2) and (8) consist only of orders. If you want to say that this shows them to be incomplete, ask yourself whether our language is complete; – whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of infinitesimal calculus were incorporated in it…. It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle" [§§18,19].

Now, first, this does not seem easy at all. Of course, no one denies that a language can increase its vocabulary, and not only by calculus and chemistry. Words also drop out of usage. In this sense no language is ever complete. But can anyone realistically imagine human beings restricting their conversation to orders and reports in battle, without words for rainy and sunny weather, agriculture, music, love, elementary politics and economics? No human group can exist without these, however primitive otherwise its form may be. Even the "language" of battle must include words that apply without reference to battle. It would include not only *this* and *there*, but also chemical, physical, and engineering terms useful in other universes of discourse. Wittgenstein himself admits, "To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life." But who can imagine a form of life restricted to battle commands or building directions? On the same page he continues, "Is the call 'Slab' in example (2) a sentence or a word? – If a word, surely it has not the same meaning as the like sounding word of our ordinary language, for in §2 it is a call. But if a sentence, it is surely not the elliptical sentence: 'Slab!' of our language" (§19).

None of this is convincing. Actually it seems *prima facie* false. That the meaning of verbal signs depends on their usage may indeed be true. But if so, the "call" *Slab* is surely the elliptical sentence of our language. Why not? What else could it be? A mere word, all by itself, without any implied context, has no meaning and is not a part of ordinary usage. The nearest thing to an isolated word is some sentence like "Slab is a word." And now we are into medieval first and second intensions.

There is another difficulty in proceeding into the *Investigations*. Clearly Wittgenstein had altered his views considerably between 1920 and 1950. Therefore, there is a possibility, at least a point to be examined, of inconsistency in the later publications. Discarding various of his old ideas, he may have retained some that should also have been deleted. There was indeed change. Whereas the earlier theory asserted a one-to-one relation between each word and its referent, the later Wittgenstein acknowledges that this is an illusion. Certainly he rejects the substitution of an artificial language for ordinary language. The point is important and his argument is devastating to earlier Positivism. *The Investigations*, §120 says,

> When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of every day. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say? *Then how is another one to be constructed?* And how strange that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have.

Then he continues with a hypothetical conversation in reply to an objector.

Whether therefore, or simply in addition, the later Wittgenstein rejected the picture theory of language – at least some of his paragraphs seem to reject it. Anthony Kenny notes three alleged contrasts between the earlier and the later Wittgenstein.[3] The first is the metaphysical atomism of the *Tractatus*. Kenny agrees that this was indeed discarded. Second is the change from emphasis on the formal structures of logic to the study of the idioms of ordinary language. Kenny asserts that this is partly accurate and partly misleading. The third, the alleged rejection of the picture theory of meaning is "almost wholly misleading." This point deserves examination.

Certainly in the *Tractatus*, for example from 3.5 to 4.021, thoughts and propositions are pictures of facts. One of his well known examples was the reconstruction of an auto accident in court by placing toy autos and dolls in the same relationships the cars and persons had on the highways. Various critics (Erik Stenius, Max Black, Anthony Kenny) have discovered profound difficulties in this theory. Even

on a more superficial level the picture theory lacks clarity. Musical notation on a sheet of paper can neither look like a sound nor sound like a sound. The *Tractatus* (*e.g.*, 4.014-4.023) does not succeed in showing what is a picture of what. At the moment, however, the point is not the stupidity of the picture theory, but the question whether or not Wittgenstein, in altering it, altered it enough to get rid of it entirely. That he did not quite succeed is clear from the following paragraphs:

> To have understood the definition means to have in one's mind an idea of the thing defined, and that is a sample or picture [§73].

> How am I to imagine *this* mechanism…perhaps a drawing reduced in scale may serve…it simply invites me to apply the picture I am given. A picture is conjured up which seems to fix the sense *unambiguously*…. The picture should be taken seriously…. We have a vivid picture…[§§425-427].

In some paragraphs, for example, 376 and 382, he seems to be criticizing the picture theory. No doubt he sees some difficulties in it; yet he does not totally reject it. Therefore, this remnant from his earlier position allows some basic inconsistencies to blur the thrust of the *Investigations*.

Language Games

The thrust, or the new analogy to replace the picture theory, is the notion of language games. Words are like chess men, playing cards, tennis and baseball, or darts: They mean what they are used for. A word functions like a pawn or rook in chess. It is not necessary that the chess men be carved in the Staunton design. Given that the rook does not look like a knight, the pieces can be any shape no matter what. They are what they are because of the rules governing their moves.

The idea that languages are games is totally destructive of Logical Positivism. Hordern will later insist that the religious language game can be played as well as the scientific language game. There is no compulsion to play tennis rather than soccer; and the Positivist who chooses science has no basis to deny a religionist his right to play a different game. This argument may not be very complimentary to religion, nor to science either; but it is devastating to Positivism. The more fundamental question, however, remains: Is language just a game?

The *Tractatus* makes no mention of language games. The later writings are full of it. As early as 1930 Wittgenstein compared language with chess. Now, as the physical shape of the pawn is of no importance, so also rules and usage determine the meaning of the symbols in mathematics, and the variables in logic. The difference between syntax and chess lies solely in their application. *Die Philosophische Grammatik*, begun in 1932 or thereabouts, constantly revised, and only published posthumously in 1969, devotes a full chapter to the analogies between chess and arithmetic. These anticipations are worked out much more fully later on.

The working-out, however, is beset with puzzling remarks. In the *Investigations*, §27, he says, "In languages (2) and (8) there was no such thing as asking something's name. This, with its correlate ostensive definition, is, we might say, a language game on its own."

Parenthetically, we might also say not:

> [T]here is also a language game of inventing a name for something, and hence of saying, "This is…" and then using the new name. (Thus, for example, children give names to their dolls and then talk about them and to them. Think in this connection how singular is the use of a person's name to *call* him!)

What is so singular? If we yell, "Hey, come here," and no one other than Jones is in the vicinity, he understands that we are calling him. But if there are a dozen workmen on the job, no one would know whom the boss is calling. He would have to yell, "Hey, Jones, come here." Is this so singular, perplexing, or profound? Similarly, in many places Wittgenstein's readers can only wonder, what is

the point?

But to return to the main notion of language games. Wittgenstein examines the term *games*:

> Someone might object against me, "You take the easy way out. You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities...." This is true. Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common...but that they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language."[4]

To make this quotation applicable, one would have to specify the relationships, and these might turn out to be the definition of language. Inasmuch as *cat* is related to *cactus*, because both words begin with c, Wittgenstein's brief reference to "relationships" is not encouraging. Or if the example of *cat* and *cactus* is deemed too trivial and irresponsible, politics and religion may be substituted. Politics is one language game; religion is another language game; politics is often related to religion. But does this help to define politics or religion? Do we call Christianity or Islam a religion because it is somehow related to politics? In fact, if language is difficult to define, still the similarities between Chinese and German are more easily found than the similarities among Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity.[5]

If now the relationships among the several languages could be specified, would not they themselves be the common quality?

Wittgenstein furnishes an explanation:

> Consider..."games." I mean board games, card games, ball games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? Don't say, "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" – but *look* and see whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that [§66].

Wittgenstein has chosen a good example of something difficult to define. Football and bridge both have opposing teams; these teams play to win. But in trying to show how difficult it is to define "game," Wittgenstein uses the example of a child throwing a ball against the wall.

Here there are neither rules, competitors, nor winning and losing. Similarly, for Wittgenstein language cannot be defined.

But a difficulty emerges. Perhaps we could both admit that the child was amusing himself and that this amusement was not a "game." In this case "rules" would become a common quality, a part of the sought-for definition. Or the situation could be analyzed in a different way. For a somewhat older child, throwing a ball against the wall, playing catch, or putting balls through the basket could be regarded, not as a game by itself, but as practice for an organized game. Spring training may not be a baseball game in itself, but its skills are used in a game. So, too, a child's prattling may be, not so much one language game as distinct from another, but simply an elementary practicing of the adult usage. More profoundly, the language of botany should not be regarded as a language of its own – though the botanical terms do not occur in baseball or in the stockmarket – nor has politics a language of its own. These are two different subjects of conversation, each with some terms of its own; but the one language, with the indispensable words *is, the, for, because, not, when, all, some, nonsense, etc.*, is ordinary English. Not restrictedly English either. German is the same "game"; the rules are the same, only the balls have a different color.

Wittgenstein wants to hold that the term *game* cannot be defined, and that therefore language games have nothing in common. To quote:

> If someone wished to say: "There is something common to all these constructions, namely the disjunction of all their

common properties" – I should reply: Now you are only playing with words. One might as well say: "Something runs through the whole thread – namely the continuous overlapping of those fibres" [§67].

This, however, does not seem so ridiculous as Wittgenstein intends, unless one of us has lost the thread of the discourse. It is precisely because of the overlapping of the fibers, in such a way that they cannot be easily pulled apart, that the thread is distinguished from loose fibers that are not thread. But more to the point, his analogy is basically poor. When he says, "The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length," the blunt materialism or at least corporealism is evident, even when he adds, "but in the overlapping of many fibres." A definition of "game," or even of one game, tennis, does not depend on a corporeal continuum. In tennis the balls may change; in baseball it hardly ever happens that a single ball survives an inning. Hence, at this point Wittgenstein's attempt to prove that language cannot be defined fails.

As an anticipation of how the present analysis will continue, let it be said that insofar as Wittgenstein's later criticisms of metaphysics depend on the indefinability of games, they have little force. However, he keeps on in his interesting way and enumerates more peculiarities in language than an ordinary person could think of in a long time. His aim is to show that neither games nor languages can be defined. The varieties in both these activities have no common quality. Yet the multitude of his observations do not quite guarantee his conclusions.

Consider games again. One may surmise that originally a game was not just rest from labor, but yet some form of active recreation.The ploughman worked hard all day and then in the evening he amused himself in some artificial problem. These amusements became more structured and brought in one or more other players. After civilization had further developed, games became work and professionals commanded high salaries. Today, for the American spectator the deliberate violence of hockey and football remains a game, as does also the cruelty of bullfights in Spain and Latin America. But for the participants they are work. The players are actors on a stage, and when actors present a play, they are not playing.

This is why one of Wittgenstein's unwitting assumptions must be questioned. "How should we explain to someone what a game is? I imagine that we should describe *games* to him" (§69). This is probably so, if we are talking to a small child. But for an adult, it is wrong. Two related sources of ambiguity require recognition. First, the historical point at which games become work escapes notice. Second, this historical point includes a change in the motivation. It is the motivation of the participant, not his actions, that make the motions fun or work. Football or tennis may be fun for the high schooler. For the professional the same motions are work: such hard work and such strong competition that the football idol, the Olympic contestant, and the horse that wins the Derby, often must use drugs. The amateur plays tennis according to the rules the Wimbledon champions use. The rules are indeed the similarity that make tennis *tennis*; but they do not make tennis a game. Different rules make chess *chess*. But it is a game because of purpose and motivation. Similarly, different vocabularies make German *German*, and English *English*. Lesser differences in vocabulary make botany one subject and politics another. But none of these prevents them from being ordinary language, and just one "game," defined by the rules of logic.

Logic

The notion that we speak several languages, even when it is all English, as we play several games each with different rules – and this seems to be the main notion throughout the *Philosophical Investigations* – depends on a view of logic which cannot be sustained. In §81 Wittgenstein writes,

F.P. Ramsey once emphasized…that logic was a "normative science." I do not know exactly what he had in mind, but it

was doubtless…that in philosophy we often *compare* the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game…as if it took the logician to show people… what a correct sentence looked like.

Then, after describing some boys amusing themselves by tossing a ball around without any rules, he adds a game in which the boys make up the rules as they go along, and later alter some. These remarks, in my opinion, seem to confuse the laws of logic with the differences between and the changes within English and German. Perhaps some day French will adopt the indeclinable masculine form for all predicate adjectives, as German has done; and the process of replacing strong verbs in English with weak verbs will doubtless continue. But this is not the case with the laws of logic. Wittgenstein's analogy is even weaker than the grammatical changes in the history of a language.

A concrete application of paragraphs 84 and 85 would be the observation that the rules of chess do not determine the opening move, much less the next ten. Similarly, the rules of language and the normative laws of logic do not determine whether one discusses botany or politics. But none of this seems to have any point. Grammar requires a plural subject to have a plural verb; yet grammar remains grammar, and English, English. Likewise, the normative laws of logic are normative, even though they do not limit the subject matter. Regardless of subject matter, however, violations of grammar can come close to destroying English. In the history of Greek the purposive conjunction *hina* became *na*, the preposition *to* used with an infinitive. This caused little confusion. The invention and introduction of the word *its* actually improved English. But if too many grammatical rules are broken, the result is a different language, as Latin became French, Spanish, and Italian. If, however, the logical rules are broken, the result is nonsense, no language at all.

Wittgenstein's remarks here are far from invalidating the notion that logic is a "normative science." Further to support his contention, he spends some interesting pages exhibiting the (non-Wellhausenian) difficulties of determining who Moses was. But however difficult it might be to determine the definition of Moses, no one can be so perverse as to say that Moses was Joshua or Solomon; yet Wittgenstein's theory of language games seems to require as much: Identifying Moses and Solomon would be just another game with its own rules.

However, before further criticism, a more extensive sample of his views on logic and language is appropriate. The following comes from paragraphs 89-109:

> In what sense is logic something sublime? For these seemed to pertain to logic…a universal significance…. For logical investigation explores the nature of all things….It takes its rise…from an urge to understand the basis or essence of everything empirical…. We do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. [Isn't that understanding something new?]…We feel as if we had to penetrate phenomena...the *possibilities* of phenomena…. Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one…. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language…. But now it may come to look as if there were something like a final analysis of our forms of language…a state of complete exactness…. When this is done the expression is completely clarified and our problem solved…. We eliminate misunderstandings by making our expressions more exact…. We want to say that there can't be any vagueness in logic…. But what becomes of logic now? Its rigor seems to be giving way here. But in that case doesn't logic altogether disappear? …We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm…. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.

These quotations are not supposed to misrepresent Wittgenstein's position. Those who wish to check every word in these twenty paragraphs may be puzzled, here and there, as to whether Wittgenstein is seriously stating his own view or occasionally taking the role of an opponent. However, it seems in the main that logic is reduced to grammar and that philosophical problems can be, not solved, but dissolved by reducing the proportion of grammatical errors and unintentional ambiguities.

The Mind-Body Problem

To give a concrete example, an attempt will now be made to show how Wittgenstein's method solves or dissolves the mind-body problem. This is surely a philosophical or metaphysical theme. Socrates was able to face death with composure because he thought that death was the separation of the soul from the body and that the soul would continue living in a better world. The Hebrew Scriptures, beginning with the early book of *Job*, mention a future life, not so frequently as the New Testament, but they mention it nonetheless. Christianity reunites the resurrected body with the soul in the eschatological future, indicating also that the soul enjoys the presence of God in the interim. Not to mention Augustine, Descartes had two created substances, mind and body, the relation between which he tried to expose. Later on – the story is well known – there were materialists who denied the existence of a mind or soul; and more recently the Behaviorists defined mind out of existence by using the word to designate a bodily function. How, now, does Wittgenstein handle this matter? The difficulty is that his remarks are disjointed and scattered. Nor is their import any too clear in some instances. Misunderstanding is very easy, and a reader or critic can only do his best.

Early paragraphs in the *Investigations* scrutinize the notion that some strictly mental activity accompanies speech and other bodily functions. Consider paragraphs 34-38:

> Suppose someone said, "I always do the same things when I attend to the shape [of an object]: my eye follows the outline and I feel…." And suppose this person were to give someone else the ostensive definition, "That is called a circle," pointing to a circular object and having all these experiences – cannot the hearer still interpret the definition differently, even though he sees the other's eyes following the outline and even though he feels what the other feels? That is to say: this "interpretation" may also consist in how he now makes use of the word…. For neither the expression "to intend the definition in such and such way" nor the expression "to interpret the definition in such and such a way" stands for a process which accompanies the giving and hearing of the definition.

Here we interrupt the series of quotations to point out a factor that appears in several places. First, the ostensive definition centers on a word. How is the word *circle* used? One must study whether the emphasis on words is a magician's trick to cause the circle itself to disappear. Then, second, why should any explanation of the use of words imply the non-occurrence of a mental process that accompanies the hearing of the definition, unless, of course, the hearing itself is mental? But if the hearing is indeed mental, and not just a physico-chemical oscillation of the eardrum, Behaviorism is excluded. Wittgenstein proceeds:

> 35. There are, of course, what can be called "characteristic experiences" of pointing to (*e.g.*) the shape. For example, following the outline with one's fingers or with one's eyes as one points. But this does not happen in all cases…. Besides, even if something of the sort did recur in all cases, it would still depend on the circumstances….

> For the words "to point to the shape," "to mean the shape" and so on, are not used in the same way as *these*: "to point to this book" (not to that one)…. Only think how differently we learn the use of the words "to point to this thing," "to point to that thing," and on the other hand "to point to the colour, not the shape," "to mean the colour," and so on.

Once again, the suggestions of this paragraph may possibly be worked up into a good argument against ostensive definition. But though it is difficult to see what Wittgenstein means by the last half of the paragraph, it is rather clear that he does not mean it as a repudiation of ostensive definition:

> Do you also know of an experience characteristic of pointing to a piece in a game *as a piece in a game*? All the same one can say, "I mean that this *piece* is called the 'king,' not this particular bit of wood I am pointing to." (Recognizing, wishing, remembering, etc.)

> 36. And we do here what we do in a host of similar cases: because we cannot specify any *one* bodily action which we call pointing to the shape (as opposed, for example, to the color), we say that a *spiritual* (mental, intellectual) activity corresponds to these words. Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a *spirit*.

This paragraph certainly seems to teach a thoroughgoing Behaviorism. Thinking, or meaning, intending something, or feeling, are actually bodily motions and as such are covered by the laws of physics and chemistry. The illusion of a mental content derives from these facts: The bodily motions are so various that no one of them is present in every case; they are often hidden from our view; therefore, common opinion suspects something non-physical, that is, mental; but in truth there is nothing but body and its motions in space.

Throughout the " ordinary language" philosophy there runs a puzzling oscillation. These philosophers, as in the previous paragraph, argue that ordinary language is mistaken when it talks Platonic metaphysics or Christian theology; then they try to erect a theory of Behaviorism by an appeal to ordinary language. But Behaviorism is itself a metaphysics. Its language, moreover, is not ordinary language, for no common language, when speaking of thought, intention, or feeling, has in mind the physical motions of bodily parts. Nor does it help the theory to reduce *thought* and *intention* to the status of words, mere words, vibrations in the air, which as such can refer to nothing.

Reporting his opponents, Wittgenstein, many paragraphs later, writes:

> 303. "I can only *believe* that someone else is in pain, but I know it if I am." – Yes: one can make the decision to say, "I believe he is in pain" instead of "he is in pain." But that is all. – What looks like an explanation here, or like a statement about a mental process, is in truth an exchange of one expression for another which, while we are doing philosophy, seems the more appropriate one. Just try – in a real case – to doubt someone else's fear or pain.

> 304. "But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior accompanied by pain and pain-behavior without any pain?" – Admit it? What greater difference could there be? – And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation is a *nothing*." – Not at all. It is not a *something*, but not a nothing either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here. The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts – which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please.

Whether there is any language that is not intended to express thoughts or mental states may be worth considering; but can the question whether or not a mind, soul, intellect, a person, will enjoy a heavenly life after physical death be dismissed as a mere matter of grammar? Note further:

> 305. "But you surely cannot deny that, for example, in remembering, an inner process takes place." – What gives you the impression that we want to deny anything? When one says, "Still an inner process does take place here" – one wants to go on: "After all, you *see* it."

Does Wittgenstein fudge a little bit here? An inner process can be muscular or physical. Only a physical process could be *seen*. Should not the hypothetical objector have said, "Do you assert or do you deny an invisible, intangible mental process?" If then Wittgenstein replies, as he might, "I neither assert nor deny it," could we not conclude that he has evaded the problem? This suspicion of evasion is soon strengthened:

> 307. "Are you not really a behaviorist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human [physical] behavior is a fiction?" – If I do speak of a fiction, then it is a grammatical fiction.…

> 383. We are not analyzing a phenomenon (*e.g.*, thought) but a concept (*e.g.*, that of thinking), and therefore the use of a word. So it may look as if what we were doing were Nominalism. Nominalists make the mistake of interpreting all words as *names*, and so of not really describing their use, but only, so to speak, giving a paper draft on such a description.

Again, one must consider whether the identification of one of Nominalism's faults quite absolves the author of the charge of Nominalism.

These quotations and the comments on them are supposed to stimulate a doubt – a mental doubt, not a vibration in the air – that Wittgenstein has dissolved the mind-body problem. A final selection will

now be given. Attention is called to certain statements that seem so obviously untrue that one is completely baffled as to why Wittgenstein made them:

> 577. We say, "I am expecting him," when we believe that he will come, though his coming does not *occupy our thoughts* [his italics; how can we *expect* or *believe* without *thinking*?] (Here "I am expecting him" would mean "I should be surprised if he didn't come" and that will not be called the description of a state of mind.) [Why not a state of mind? Is it a motion in the larynx?] But we also say "I am expecting him" when it is supposed to mean: "I am eagerly awaiting him."

The remainder of the paragraph "imagines" that there might be a language in which "expecting with joy" is one verb and "expecting with fear" is a different verb. It is not necessary to imagine: The Navajo language has several instances where several such verbs replace a single one in English. But does this show that we can expect a man's coming without thinking about his coming?

Then Wittgenstein continues: "578. Ask yourself. What does it mean to *believe* Goldbach's theorem? What does this belief consist in? In a feeling of certainty as we state, hear, or think the theorem? (That would not interest us.)" But does it not interest one who is trying to solve the mind-body problem? The only person it does not interest is one who has a feeling of certainty that he has solved the problem, or one who thinks that the Saturday afternoon football game is far more important.

To continue paragraph 578:

> [H]ow does the belief connect with this proposition?… what are the consequences of this belief?… "It makes me search for a proof of the proposition." – Very well; and now let us look and see what belief in the proposition amounts to…. 580. An "inner process" stands in need of outward criteria.

If, now, Wittgenstein is talking about how you can know that I believe a certain theorem, just that and nothing else, it is plausible to say that an inner process needs an outward criterion. Furthermore, it is plausible that you could never know for sure what I believe. I might be as deceitful as Catherine de Medici and your opinion of my belief would be only a wild guess. But, note, all this bypasses the mind-body problem. Wittgenstein's remarks do not rule out an inner, mental process; but the instigator of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre makes the inner process plausible. A less gory example is Socrates' standing motionless for twenty-four hours, thinking about we know not what.

> 583.... Could someone have a feeling of ardent love or hope for the space of one second – *no matter what* preceded or followed this second?…the word *hope* refers to a phenomenon of human life. (A smiling mouth *smiles* only in a human face.)

Of course, no one could have a feeling of hope, or a belief in a theorem, without something preceding or succeeding the given second. But this does not show that the past and future contexts are physical and behavioristic, rather than mental and spiritual.

In fact, upon reading much of this the first time, one might conclude that Wittgenstein is not discussing Behaviorism at all. Unfortunately, he has explicitly connected Behaviorism with this discussion. In at least one place he seems to claim that he is not a Behaviorist: He is only a grammarian dealing with words. But if so, his observations are not examples of a method to solve metaphysical problems. The following paragraphs point out the difficulty, not only of your knowing my mind, but also of my knowing my mind. Strictly speaking, this is a matter, rather, of my knowing what my mind will be tomorrow. But none of it persuades me that I have no mind. Vibrations of the larynx, wiggles of the dendritic processes, are not persuasion.

The conclusion is that although Wittgenstein has made many very interesting remarks and has proposed many intriguing puzzles, he has done nothing to solve, or even dissolve, metaphysical and theological problems.

[1] Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, Macmillan, 1953.

[2] Wittgenstein does not begin at the beginning of a sentence. He omits "Prensabam memoria." More seriously, he passed over a previous "sed ego ipse mente quam dedisti mihi, deus meus, cum…edere vellum sensa cordis mei…." Nor does Wittgenstein refer to the tractate *De Magistro*.

[3] Kenny, *Wittgenstein,* 1973, 219-220.

[4] *Philosophical Investigations*, §65.

[5] On the definition of religion, see chapter one of the writer's *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*.

WILBUR MARSHALL URBAN

Introduction

The secular language theories, not surprisingly, provoked a reaction in defense of religious language. It could not all be unmitigated nonsense. However much the descriptions of Homer and the terminology of Augustine, the works of Luther and Calvin, not to mention the sacred books of Islam and Hinduism, and all the poetry and hymnology of the ages – however much the wording may have obscured the reality, a motivation cannot be denied. What they said at such great length must mean something.

Apparently the first twentieth-century author to reply at any length to Logical Positivism's language theory was Wilbur Marshall Urban, (1873-1952), whose 750-page volume appeared in 1939. Neither Urban nor his theory was Christian. It was simply religious. Later there came a flood of smaller books written by authors who professed some form of Christianity loosely so-called. E.L. Mascall published *Words and Images* in 1957; Langdon Gilkey published *Maker of Heaven and Earth* in 1959; but this is not the place for a bibliography. These later writers seem to have been stimulated positively by Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth more than they were negatively by Logical Positivism. What needs to be pointed out, however, is the fact that these later so-called Christian theories do not show any knowledge of the early nineteenth-century language theory of Horace Bushnell, to which they are in several respects similar.

The procedure will now be (1) begin with Urban as more directly opposed to Logical Positivism. Next will come (2) a criticism of E.L. Mascall, who indeed follows Urban chronologically, but who also argues for a theory of much earlier origin. Then we shall consider (3) Horace Bushnell, followed by (4) a sampling of the large majority of contemporary liberal theologians.

Empiricism and Meaning

This very interesting author judiciously begins with the basic empiricism of John Locke. Locke had been surprised to find that he could not complete his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* without investigating the relationship between thought and words. Berkeley learned from Locke and concluded that all or most of the confusions in philosophy resulted from the use of words apart from the ideas they should symbolize. "Draw the curtain of words to behold the fairest tree of knowledge." Urban states the problem very clearly: If all words originate in sense experience, then when they are carried over into the non-physical, the problem of their valid reference to non-sensible ideas is immediately raised.[1] Or, further,

> the naturalistic and ultimately Behavioristic view of language which has developed of necessity from Darwinian premises, has brought with it a skepticism of the word, a distrust of language more fundamental than any hitherto experienced. The naturalization of language makes of it, in the last analysis, merely a method of adaptation to and control of environment, and denies to it *ab initio* all fitness for apprehending and expressing anything but the physical…[31].

> Or, more pointedly, can advanced mathematics be expressed in Urords, or is there a gap between the word and the world? If medieval Nominalism denied universals, the new Nominalism denies individuals [34].

Then Urban asks the questions he intends to answer:

(1) How is language a bearer of meaning?
(2) How is communication possible?
(3) What is the relation of logic to language?
(4) How can language refer to things?

This monograph has no intention of summarizing his 750-page answers; a few of his suggestive ideas are all that can be included here.

Urban's material may be roughly divided into two parts. There are his refutations, not only of Logical Positivism, but of John Dewey also and a few others; and second, there are his own constructive efforts. Some of the former is almost essential to an understanding of the latter.

John Dewey held that language changed brute animals into thinking and knowing animals by creating the realm of meaning. Urban asks, was there not first a realm of meaning for the expression of which language was created?

If language created meaning, then obviously things could have no meaning prior to language. Urban is willing to acknowledge that some meanings are created by language, but he is especially concerned to show that there must be pre-linguistic meaning. One example of this is the fact that a wolf will refuse to eat a piece of meat in which poison has been hidden. In some sense the wolf senses a meaning. The bait means death. For the animal, however, the meaning is not detachable from the sensory thing; for man, on the other hand, it is.

Although human beings also sense these animal meanings, for example when we begin to chew a bad nut and spit it out, there are for us extrinsic meanings also. John Dewey may say, the clouds *mean* rain. But they do not mean rain in the same way that a bad taste causes us to spit it out. The clouds are a sign of a different physical event. If the clouds meant rain in the animal sense, they would mean the action of seeking shelter, as the bad nut starts us spitting. But if the clouds really mean rain, there must be a certain individuation of both the sign and the thing indicated, which is not present in animal meaning. When the clouds mean rain, they do not necessarily mean seeking shelter – we may already be indoors looking at meteorological instruments. Meaning as a cue or stimulus to action and meaning as a relation between a sign and the thing signified are two different meanings of *meaning*.

Or, in other words, the Behaviorist theory that a thing causes a reaction fails to distinguish mechanical habits from interpretation of signs. If the sign is merely causal, there is no interpretation.

Urban wants to insist on this point. Russell had said that "meaning is an observable property of observable entities." Others of the same opinion say "meaning is directly perceptible like color and sound"; it is "an object of direct perception." Though he acknowledges a sense in which this is true, Urban takes it as confusing. Russell's theory assumes things are *given*; but if only sensations are given, it is meaning that transforms sense data into things. Things are "ideal constructions" (105). Meaning is not something that is perceived; it is understood.

When, however, Urban turns from criticizing Russell and the Positivists, and suggests something constructive, one must be cautious. He wants sounds to become words bearing meaning by their similiarity to the things they designate. The word *buzz* is an imitation of the sound it signifies. Or, the inherent meaning of the sound *ache* turns it into a word. Such onomatopoeic words are the first words of a language. Now, while the *zz* in *buzz* may sound like the noise of sawing, what about the letter *B*? Why should it not have been *fuzz*? Then, further, it is hard to see the similarity between the sound *ache* and a pain. Later when he asserts that *ouatou*, a word in some primitive language, sounds like and is a symbol of a stream, and that *ouatou-ou-ou* for the same reason means *ocean*, it is hard to follow him.

There are, of course, onomatopoeic words; and there are also metaphors. Urban mentions the

transference of the word *kid,* a young goat, to a human child. In fact, he says that metaphor is the primary law of speech construction. Does this not seem somewhat of an exaggeration? The introduction of the word *its* into the English language is hardly the result of metaphor. Nor can the declining use of cases in Greek as it changed to Koine with the increasing use of prepositions be so explained. Nor the virtual extinction of the optative mood. However, Urban's opposition to Behaviorism is well based:

> In the words of C.S. Lewis, " speech is only that part of behavior which is most significant of meanings and most useful for communication."…The inability of the Behavioristic theory to explain even animal meaning, if in the concept of meaning is included the notion of understanding or interpretation of signs, would inevitably bring with it the conclusion that *a fortiori* it is unable to explain linguistic meaning…. The causal conception of meaning [in] reductive behaviorism equates both the meaning of the thing and the meaning of the word with our way of reacting…. All meaning…is sufficiently accounted for by causal relations…. The taste of a caterpillar or the sound of a bell are, to be sure, *caused* by the stimuli, but *unless* the notion of understanding, or interpretation of sign as sign be left out of the notion of meaning, the plausibility [of Behaviorism] vanishes…. When we come to linguistic meaning...it is precisely *understanding* that is the *sine qua non* of such meaning….the sound does not become a linguistic fact at all until it is detached from its purely causal context…and this detachment and mobility are not functions of the physical environment [129-131].

Then Urban strengthens his attack on Behaviorism by a discussion of intention.

Metaphor

All this may be and is a valuable refutation of Behaviorism, but Urban's view that words represent, rather than are symbols for, things, has its own difficulties. Previously mentioned was *buzz* and *ouatou.* He will not have words to be arbitrary symbols. The symbol is imitative and conjures up the picture of the thing itself. Therefore picturesque language is more adequate than conceptual: For example, " Theory is gray but life is green" would be less adequately expressed in conceptual terms (147-148).

Quite the contrary, so it seems. Such metaphors have to be puzzled out and put into literal language before their vagueness is dissipated. They make for good poetry, but not for good understanding. When he says of analogical predication, "I am bringing to light some aspect…which could not be determined or expressed except by such a transfer" (179), he robs analogy of all meaning. Unless the analogy is based on a literal and univocal similarity, there could be no analogy at all. Urban indeed on this very page states clearly enough the views of those who oppose him (we abuse words when we use them metaphorically, a case of equivocal predication; analogical predication is ambiguous), but if some people agree with Urban, others think the view he states so well and rejects so sharply is the literal, unequivocal truth. Similarly unacceptable is his dictum that "all words have originally unquestionably a physical reference [and] words for relations are primarily spatial in character" (185). The term *originally* may push the question so far back into primitive society that no one can produce evidence for or against the thesis. But if God gave Adam language for the purpose of worship, at least the word *God* did not have a physical reference. Nor is it evident how the relationship of "more wise," or "more witty" could ever have been primarily spatial. Or, for that matter, what spatial relation can be found in *uncle* or *cousin*? It would seem that sometimes Urban makes very general assertions without sufficient justification.

Urban returns to these points many pages later. All words have a physical origin and a physical reference. After using such words, someone intuits a value and by metaphor applies the physical word to a new reference. We do not first intuit an object and then express it: The expression is a constitutive part of the knowing. Language creates the world of cognitive meanings. This paragraph (345) is mainly concerned with values, words such as *generosity, nobility of character*, and moral

values in general. Even the word *morality*, though he does not use this word as one of his examples, must have had a physical origin, which then creates a cognitive meaning.

This sounds implausible and self-contradictory. It is implausible because without the "intuition" of an object, there would be no stimulus to expression. Why or how could anyone invent a word, other than a nonsense syllable, if he had nothing to express? The meaning must come first and its symbol second. As electricity was being studied in early modern times, the experimenters noticed certain relationships. To that date, no names had been given them. They had not been known before, so that there was nothing to name. But when the "intuitions" occurred, the scientists took the names of three of their own number, Volta, Ampère, and Ohm, and assigned these names to the level of energy, the quantity of current, and the resistance. Only after a person has a thought can he give it a name.

Not only is Urban's theory thus implausible, but it is also self-contradictory because he cannot avoid the difficulty that made it implausible: "All words are physical in origin.… It is through metaphysical transfer that they acquire their new references…they become the vehicle for the intuition and description or expression of new entities." Here we have the intuition or knowledge first and the word comes second. But a page and a half later Urban says,

> any intuition of reality…without an element of description is pure myth…. Knowing in any significant sense of the word is inseparable from language…language *creates* [his italics] the world of cognitive meanings…. Intuition is impossible without expression…the expression is rather a constitutive part of the intuition itself…. One does not first possess an object in knowing and then express the nature of that object in terms of arbitrary and conventional signs, but the expression is a constitutive part of the knowing itself [347].

Aside now from the fact or, if you wish, the appearance of contradiction between pages 145 and 147, the latter seems false. Urban uses Croce and aesthetics for support. "The artist does not first intuit or present his object to himself and then find linguistic or other forms with which to express it." The present writer deems this to be false because one of his hobbies is oil painting; and he always selects his object first and then tries to find a form by which to express it. But no doubt Urban would reply: That is why you are not much of an artist. However, the present writer also writes, and if he does not have the object, the knowledge, the argument, before he puts it in words, any words he should write would be much worse than those now found in his publications. And if Urban had not thought before he wrote, I could not imagine how he could have completed so interesting a book.

Without doubt Urban is indeed interesting; and a great deal of what he says is excellent. He tries to alleviate his notion of spatial reference and pictorial representation by saying that poetry conveys a meaning not expressible in any logical picture. Poetry is pictorial but not spatial. A map is a spatial picture, but Turner's painting of Venice is not spatial. Now, it would seem that a spatial or pictorial theory needs considerable alleviation; but Turner's painting and all other landscapes as well are surely spatial. They may alter the actual proportions of buildings or trees; they may disturb perspective; but surely they are spatial representations. What is better in Urban is his acknowledgment that symbolic representations, chemical formulas, and musical scores are not pictorial. Quite so; but then why extend the term *pictorial* so far, rather than simply abandoning it as a theory of spatial language?

More acceptable, indeed highly commendable, are some of his remarks in refutation of Nominalism. Scholastic Nominalism, he asserts, is inconsistent because it still retained the reality of individuals. Neo-nominalism abolishes all substantives: All is flux and names distort reality. If universals are unreal, individuals are too, for the mere naming of a thing is a minimal universal. Neo-nominalism therefore has no things, but only " events." But this makes nonsense of (1) perceptual meanings; (2) value meanings; and (3) descriptions; then (4) because it makes nonsense of

metaphysics, it makes nonsense of all empirical meaning, for the former conditions the latter (354-369).

Further, in opposition to his opponents Urban remarks that it is an assumption of evolutionary naturalism, not a necessity of logic, that language is purely practical. Even if it had originally been such, it may have developed other uses since. But even at first language was not purely practical: it was made for human communication, and this is wider than mere practicality.

The difficulties in Urban's extensive material seem to spring from the opposition between his basic empiricism and its unwanted implications. Meaning and verifiability are inseparable, he says; but observation is not the sole method of verification. Mere sense data are not knowledge. No sentence is purely ostensive. Direct verification is a myth. It is one sentence that verifies another sentence. Sentences are needed to interpret the sense datum. For example, an observation of Mercury as verification involves a host of presuppositions. The isolated observation cannot verify. Therefore, also, perceptual truth is only probable.

Sometimes Urban is not only perceptive, but witty as well. The several theories of truth, he says – correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic – cannot be shown to correspond to truth. Coherence coheres with nothing. And the Pragmatic theory does not work. Therefore the neo-Positivists conclude that the meaning of truth is a meaningless question, for if meaning is always reference to a sensory object, truth can have no meaning because it refers to no object: The truth of the criteria is truth only of interpretation.

Along with wit and insight Urban's constructive theory contains much that is puzzling. It seems that originally language with its onomatopoeic words was always poetry, or at least aesthetic expression. Science came later. Even though he so extends the term *poetry* to include prose as well, its language is neither cognitive nor practical. Its power is the power to evoke images. The intellectualistic fallacy views the aesthetic symbol as an imperfect substitute for philosophic or scientific knowledge. On the contrary, Urban asserts, the symbol contains an unexpressed reference which the abstract concept cannot express.

But is this so? Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, though its abstract concepts in the last two lines are utter nonsense, expresses something about a moment detached from the flux of time. It does not express it very well, and we can hardly be sure what Keats had in mind. Probably he was somewhat confused. But had he thought clearly and expressed himself intelligibly, a reader, no matter how poetical the poem, could have put the meaning into clear conceptual prose. What cannot be expressed clearly is not meaningful. The same is true of all art. Take the painting *Angelus*. In our civilization the attitude of the two persons is recognized as the attitude of prayer. Presumably, because they are French peasants, the painting pictures Roman Catholic devotion. But the painting does not convey this information. Present such pictures to people who know nothing about France or Roman Catholicism, for example a Tibetan monk or a Japanese shogun of last century, and they can only ask, What does it mean? The abstract or conceptual statement is far clearer than any picture can be. One of Urban's examples is Pascal's phrase, "Man is a reed, but a thinking reed." Urban continues, "To say that man is a reed is…biological[ly] grotesque. Yet it is by precisely such deviations from the real that certain aspects of reality, otherwise inexpressible, are actually expressed" (474). Now, Pascal, the mathematical genius, could, when he wished, use metaphorical and poetic language. But to say that his meaning is "otherwise inexpressible" is not biologically, but intellectually grotesque. One can say, "man's bones are more easily cracked than granite and a drop of water properly placed can kill him; yet neither the rock nor the water can think and thinking is infinitely superior to mere physical existence." The aesthetic quality is here missing, but the thought is nonetheless more intelligibly

expressed; and the thought is superior to mere aesthetic enjoyment. Urban also quotes four lines from T.S. Eliot as "expressive or revelatory to an extraordinary degree." The first two lines are intelligible; the third may be guessed at; but the fourth expresses or reveals nothing but the unintelligible confusion of Eliot's mind.

Repeating the idea "not otherwise expressible" four pages later, and after another ten pages of fairly clear expression of his ideas, Urban defends himself by saying, "In that symbolic form an aspect of reality is given which cannot be adequately expressed otherwise. It is not true that whatever is expressed symbolically can be better expressed literally. For there *is* [his italics] no literal expression, but only another kind of symbol" (500). To which the intellectualist replies, "The cat is black." Anyone who then says, "The cat is black" is poetical metaphor, does not deserve a literal denial.

For the purpose at hand, this monograph cites Urban as a defender of religious language against the Positivists' assertion that religion is meaningless. The reader may now anticipate how he does so. Religion and poetry are closely related, but not identical. The emotion of religion has the quality of "the holy," which poetry does not necessarily have. Religious language is not only evocative, but invocative as well. Thus religion has a personal God and is therefore dramatic and mythic. As the poet gets something of reality which the scientist has missed, so the religious person gets something the poet has missed. Religious language communicates something other language cannot.

These several of Urban's phrases are at best ambiguous. Of course the poet gets something the physicist *qua* physicist has missed. Does not biological language grasp something chemistry has missed? The language of football gets and misses what the language of international diplomacy misses and gets. The confusion here is between language as such, and the various subject matters of conversation. Of course, chemistry is not botany; but the language of all of these is the same English language. Urban's statement therefore is true and trivial. What he really means, as his own wording in one place indicates, is that religion is emotional. Religion has no place for thinking. It is not intelligible. God cannot be known. Belief has no place. This is surely not trivial: It is simply false. If it is not false, then Christianity is not a "religion."

The religions Urban can identify all speak the same language and are immediately friends. But Christ had religious enemies. He said, "No man comes to the Father, but by me." Christ, of course, was not very religious. Well, maybe Jesus was religious once in a while, for " Holy Communion…is a simple piece of symbolism to express a number of spiritual truths too great for ordinary language…. The symbol expresses something too great for words" (586).

Now, the present writer, whose theology is known to a certain public, may not and does not claim to understand all the logical implications of the Lord's Supper; but unless he had a literal understanding of some of its intellectual meaning, he would have no reason for going through the motions.

In opposition to sacramentarianism where the magic works apart from understanding, the Scripture says, Let a man examine himself – an intellectual task – for he that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body – an intellectual task. Therefore the Covenanters and Calvinists will not celebrate the Supper without a sermon to be understood. As Calvin said, an implicit faith is no faith at all.

More broadly, if Adam and Eve (590) are merely mythological or metaphorical expressions of man's emotional alienation from an unknowable God, then Jesus is simply a character in Aesop's fables to represent a fanciful union with that God. This implication by itself does not refute Urban's religion, but it shows that it is not the Christian religion. The implication also suggests, in fact

Urban's religious theory demands, that his religion be irrational (and repulsive). Though he himself had said that God is personal, this statement also must be mythological and has no intelligible meaning. Its "concrete terms" are not what religion "really says" (621). Quoting Brightman with approval, Urban's "idea of God *symbolizes* [his italics] a unity or harmony between existence and value" (624). But no doubt this impersonal harmony is itself also a literally untrue myth. Urban indeed tries to salvage religious language from the nonsense of Logical Positivism, but he so empties it of all intelligible meaning that the result is no better.

1 Urban, *Language and Reality* [1939], 1971, 27, 28.

E. L. Mascall

In the introductory paragraphs to the last chapter, it was noted that Kierkegaard and Barth had a compelling influence over most of the later authors. The work of E.L. Mascall (1905-1993), however, will prevent us from assuming that this influence was completely universal. His only reference to Barth says,

> It is not surprising that Dr. Karl Barth's slogan, *Finitum non capax infiniti*, went together with a denial not only of the possibility of natural theology (that is, of any knowledge of God acquirable by man's natural powers) but also of any rational understanding of revelation.[1]

We must now outline the matrix, that is, the theory in which this quotation is embedded.

Mascall's Thomism

In Mascall's book, *Words and Images*, the Foreword raises "the question whether the utterances which we make when…asserting or denying that God exists have any significance whatever." In anticipation of the Thomistic view he will defend, he acknowledges that Christian philosophers

> at their best…had always been willing and indeed anxious to admit that there was something very peculiar about theological assertions…and the medieval theologians had constructed a department of logic – the doctrine of analogy – expressly to deal with this fact [viii].

Mascall begins with a long critique of Ayer's verification principle. His fourth point is that Ayer uncritically limited " experience" to sensation. This limitation, however, cannot be a generalization from experience because " mystical experience in the broadest sense…contradicts it and [this] certainly ought not to be dismissed without detailed examination. But in Ayer's book such an examination is nowhere made" (10). Mascall defends mystical experience. This was Mascall's fourth point. His other arguments are also important, though they are not necessary to an exposition of his theory of language.

However much Mascall opposes the verification principle, and the restriction of meaningfulness to tautologies (definitionally true) and sensorily verifiable statements (meaningful but sometimes true, sometimes false), he insists on empiricism. Experience is the sole source of knowledge, but experience is not always sensory. Even " sense experience itself may consist of something more than experience of sense-objects" (31). Also "there may be experience which is not expressible in sentences at all, or which is expressible only in sentences of a very peculiar kind" (31). Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, in addition to or because of their sensory definition of experience, denied to the intellect any activity other than *inference* from sensation: "the intellect in no way *apprehends*, it merely *infers*" (33). Against this Mascall asserts, quite apart from any mystical experience, that the sensible "particular…is not the terminus of perception, not the *objectum quod*…but the *objectum quo*, through which the intellect grasps, in a direct but mediate activity, the intelligible extramental reality, which is the real thing" (34).

It is interesting to note that Mascall goes beyond (as he says) Thomas and refuses to assume that "the real intelligible world [is] isomorphic with the subjective sensible one" (41). For example, relativity and quantum theory are not statements about sensible phenomena: They are "expressions of

the kind of intelligibility that the real world has."

Then Mascall adds a short defense of mystical experience, the language of which is entirely unintelligible to all who have not had the experience. Hence it is useless to discuss it.

Any theory of language depends on a view concerning the extent of possible knowledge and the methods of learning. Basic to Mascall's position is the assumption that "the intellect does not only reason, but also *apprehends*; it has, as its objects, not only truths, but *things*" (63). Understanding as *ratio* is the power of discursive, logical thought, of drawing conclusions; understanding as *intellectus* is a *simplex intuitus*, a simple vision to which truth offers itself like a landscape to the eye. "*Intellectus* is not concerned simply with the apprehension of a purely spiritual or ideal realm; it is concerned equally with the perception of the everyday world of material things" (64).

In order that the reader may not confuse the position of the present writer with those of Mascall, Gilkey, or others, it seems allowable to interpolate into this exposition some preliminary but basic criticism.

From the time of Parmenides down to the present, various philosophers have based their epistemology on an analogy between eyesight and knowledge. The object of knowledge, the thing known, has been regarded as an individual object, somewhat like a tree or a rock. This object can be "seen" with various degrees of clarity. Poor eyesight or fog prevents seeing it clearly, though the field of vision includes its complete outline with the background around it. One sees the whole of it, if not the details. Thus God looms up before us in a fog. Bonaventura described it as a global representation of which the intuition is lacking. Mascall presumably wants to preserve some sort of intuition.

But before considering such a difficult object as God, let us apply Mascall's view to a tree or a rock. He says the intellect grasps material things: We can know the tree. Now if one should challenge him to prove that he knows this individual tree, what could he say but that it is an oak tree, about forty feet tall, with leaves shaped like those of other oak trees, whose wood is coarse-grained and very hard? Unless he says something like this, would we not conclude that he does not know this individual tree? Of course, he could be less botanical and say simply, the trunk is brown and the leaves are green.

Note that when he tells us what he knows, he gives us sentences. For the sake of argument, we agree that the sentences are true. But the words "oak tree" are not true. A noun all by itself is neither true nor false. Knowledge (and is not knowledge the possession of a truth?) always comes in propositions. Otherwise language could not express a truth. Therefore the intellect does not grasp individual material things. It is also impossible to know mental "things," if there are such. Is the concept of *two* an individual thing? Whether or not, the concept of *two*, all by itself, is unknowable. "One plus one equals two" can be known, and we assert it as a truth; but the number *two*, alone, like the oak tree, is neither true nor false. The content of knowledge is always propositional. This view allows the intellect to do something else besides drawing conclusions. It can know premises as well as conclusions. Call it *simplex intuitus*, or contemplation, or understanding, it is different from drawing an implication. Axioms can never be conclusions. But all truth comes in propositions. One can somewhat anticipate how this view of truth can apply to a theory of language.

After some twenty or more pages of Thomism, Mascall is ready to discuss "the relation of words to thought and communication" (88). First, he repudiates the notion that language is a code, in the sense that one person puts his thoughts into a code and the other person decodes them again into thoughts. We shall not boggle at the necessity of both persons' knowing the same code. With all the ambiguities of English, "neither of them will apply the name 'tree' to the object to which the other will apply the name 'tin-opener.'" The two persons learn the code "by a process in which ostensive

definition by our elders plays a large part."

This code theory, Mascall continues, is not wholly false, but it has "only a very limited validity" (91). Its basic defect is the same as that of the sensationalist theory: It confounds the *objectum quod* with the *objectum quo*. This defect becomes clear when one inquires as to how the code was originally set up. Ostensive definitions are impossible unless the learner already knows that ostensive definition is going on. Dogs don't know this. Linguistic formulae, like sensible particulars, are neither *objecta quae* of communication (for then they would be mere *flatus vocis*) nor are they merely more or less accurate structural replicas of thought; rather they are *objecta quibus*: They are the means by which two minds can share in a common intellectual life. *Cor ad cor loquitur*. Mascall as a learned Thomist must use the Latin code: English says, heart speaks to heart (92). But neither English, nor Latin, nor Mascall, is very clear on this point.

This vagueness allows him to say that the techniques, the codes, of poetry, painting, science, and theology will all be different. Each is adequate to its particular function. Nor is the function of art merely to evoke emotion, and not to communicate truth. With less vagueness, I hope, the present writer agrees that the function of art, even music, is to express truth; but maybe not just as Mascall intends. Further, Mascall is not so much interested in the languages of music and painting as he is in theological language, where the transcendent God stands out in sharp contrast with every other subject of human thought and discourse (93).

Theological Language

Mascall gives two examples of theological language. First is the poetry, and prose commentary thereon, of St. John of the Cross. In spite of the artificiality of the technique, every reader, says Mascall, must be struck by the coherence and profundity of the Carmelite Doctor. "What justifies a particular descriptive technique is not its conformity to a predetermined criterion, but its simple capacity to get its stuff across" (95). Some people, however, would say that St. John leaves them completely baffled as to his meaning.

The second example is that of some "Protestant controversialists" who have trouble with the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. They argue that Christ relinquished his office of priest because after his ascension he sat down on the right hand of the heavenly majesty. Priests stand; kings are seated. No one can be both seated and standing at the same time. Therefore *Hebrews* is inconsistent because it describes him as sitting and also as a priest. Mascall, to defend the consistency of the epistle, argues that analogies are not to be taken literally. Analogies literally understood may conflict, but yet convey consistent meanings. To some extent this is true, if analogies convey enough meaning. But would it not be better to end this puzzle before it begins? Sometimes priests sit down, and sometimes kings stand in their chariots as they ride into battle.

Of course, it is true that analogies are not to be taken literally; but here is where the theory of analogy must engage in mortal combat, rise from its seat, and be laid low. Mascall himself states the problem: how "a figure which is used only analogically manages to describe its object at all" (96).

To the critic Mascall's answer seems to be an admission of complete defeat. The atonement, he says, is variously explained by Christians and Christian churches. There really is no one clear-cut doctrine of the atonement. Several incompatible picturesque images are in use, none of which applies univocally. Each analogy applies only up to a point and no further. Yet this does not imply "that theological discourse is insufferably imprecise" (97). The figures of speech may awaken a man to the realization of his alienation from God. Then when he enters into the sacramental fellowship of the church, he will experience the atonement. "The mystery will now be known obscurely and

imperfectly, it is true, but no longer imprecisely." The atonement is then "known not by description but by acquaintance."

The question was, How does a figure of speech, an analogy, manage to describe its object at all? Does not Mascall reply, It doesn't? Since he insists that there is no orthodox doctrine of the atonement, since therefore several people mean different things by the term, the analogies apply equally to incompatible doctrines. Or, better, they apply to nothing, for no one idea is acknowledged as being pictured.

If the doctrine of the atonement were clearly known, a preacher might use a pleasing analogy or illustration that might attract his congregation and help fix the meaning in their minds. But suppose none of them has the least literal notion of what doctrine X means. This might not be the case with some well instructed congregations, but it was certainly true on many foreign mission fields in the ninth or nineteenth century. Now, then, says the missionary, I want to explain to you doctrine X. None of them had even heard the word X before. So the missionary says, X is like the dawning of the morning. One of his audience thinks, X is an event that happens approximately every twenty-four hours. Another in the audience thinks, X is something reddish-orange. A third guesses that X is a work of art, though not necessarily reddish-orange. A fourth supposes that X is a method of locating east. But since none of them has any knowledge of the literal meaning of X, they have no way of determining in what respects X is like the dawn and in what respects it is not. Analogies require but do not furnish information.

Mascall is forced into his otiose theory of analogy by his basic concept of the origin and use of language. " God is by definition an infinite and suprasensible being, while all the language that we have in which to talk about him has been devised in order to describe and discuss the finite objects of our sense-experience" (101). But if one rejects this view of the origin and purpose of language, if one maintains that language is a divine gift for the purpose of conversing literally with God – as well as for counting sheep – then he does not entangle himself in ineffective illustrations in order to talk about God or even the number two.

A paragraph in the book almost admits this, but Mascall seems to miss the import of his own words: "We must recognize that thought about God – knowledge of God – precedes discourse about him. If we could not *know* [his italics] anything about God, we certainly could not *say* anything about him. And the possibility of knowing God is intimately bound up with the doctrine of creation" (103). Mascall makes this excellent statement to prepare for his rejection of Barth's view. It is pertinent. But does it not also, if slightly less obviously, dispose of Thomism as well?

Mascall then concludes by noting the undeniable fact that the Bible uses images. It is not so undeniable that such images are "*objecta quibus* in the cognitive process." Further, the cognitive process Mascall has in mind does not seem to be cognitive, for he quotes Farrer with approval to the effect that if we seek theological propositions, if we try to deduce from Scripture a logical system of doctrine, "we close our ears to the voice of Scripture" (115). What we need is "the life of spiritual images." In his own words Mascall continues, "for the understanding of images it is not necessary for us to get behind them to a non-metaphorical understanding of fact. The images themselves illuminate us" (116).

These statements are not meaningless nonsense as the Positivists would claim; they are just plain false.

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1 *Words and Images,* 104.

Some conservative theologians may still dimly remember Bushnell (1802-1876) as one who preached the " moral influence theory" of the atonement; but few if any, conservative or liberal, ever heard of his theory of language until Donald A. Crosby published *Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language* (Mouton: The Hague, 1975). Disagreeing with that author's evaluation, this study will nonetheless profit by his scholarly investigations.

Language, for Bushnell, begins when some primitive man attached sounds to physical objects. It was essentially a language of nouns. Verbs begin as nouns denoting actions. All words originate in physical images. The word *and* came from *an add*. In time – lengthy time is often used to solve problems that cannot be explained – intellectual terms came into use. Physical objects furnish the ground for the symbolism of intellectual discourse.

Empiricism

This development is not so successful as one might wish. Words cannot properly represent even physical shapes. Words name species, not individuals; in fact, they name only sensations. Hence the inexactitude of the original physical language increases when applied to the shapeless ideas of the mind.

Here an observation may be interpolated. Bushnell raised a question as to how a code could originate. It is a legitimate problem. But there is no difficulty in defending the adequacy of codes. The letters *d-o-g* and the letters *H-u-n-d* and the letters *c-h-i-e-n* are all adequate to represent a certain type of animal. Symbols are always adequate, just because they are symbols. It seems useless to question the adequacy of theological language. If theological thought can be defended, the language will take care of itself. A person may indeed think of cat or God at the wrong time; and he may say *chien* when he means *chat*, but this is no defect in language as such. Therefore, if one has an idea of the shapeless number that solves the equation $x^2 + 1 = 0$, any symbol will do.

However, for Bushnell, the shapes of physical objects are supposed to represent, poorly, theological and mathematical objects. Figurative language is clearer than literal. "No turn of logical deduction can prove anything, by itself, not previously known by inspection or insight."[1] Or, conversely, the logical arguments of the Trinitarians are bad and irreligious; but the Unitarians are even worse because their logic is better. Both should confine themselves to images.

Bushnell seems to oscillate between language and the thought it symbolizes, for he explains that logic – not the choice of symbols – developed from grammar, and grammar came from physical relations in nature.

This is a basic and fatal flaw in all empiricism. Even Aristotle failed to give Aristotelian logic an acceptable basis. The reason is that the laws of logic are universal. The syllogism *Barbara* is always, everywhere, and without exception valid. But experience is never universal. One may observe a thousand black crows, but this is of no value in supporting the proposition, All crows are black. The next crow may be an albino. Hence physical relations in nature, if indeed they could produce grammar, would still never arrive at any principle of logic, mathematics, or theology.

Paradox

Maybe Bushnell had some vague inkling that this is so, for he concludes that therefore language can apply to truth only in an analogical sense. We need poetic insight. We come closer to the truth only when it is offered "paradoxically." *Paradoxically* is Bushnell's own term, some seventy-five years before Karl Barth.

And it is much the same irrationalism. Poetry is better than prose; the poet's contradictions are all facets of the truth. Inconsistency is a positive good, for truth resides in feeling. The *Gospel of John* is the best *Gospel* because it contains the greatest number of contradictions. Creeds have some value for their own time, for each one illuminates a given facet. We should, or can, easily believe them all – the Assumption of Mary, the Swedenborgian heaven, the pronouncements of Brigham Young, and the *unveränderte Augsburg Confession*.

When such criticisms are directed against Bushnell, a peculiar situation arises. The author Crosby, in defense of Bushnell, complains that the critics take Bushnell literally, whereas he should be understood metaphorically. If he says language begins with nouns attached to physical things, he does not mean that this is true literally. If he says the laws of logic are abstracted from limited experience, he does not really mean it. What the critic should have done is to take Bushnell's words "suggestively." To some people Bushnell's words suggest nonsense.

When in opposition to Bushnell's emphasis on feelings Hodge says, "The whole healthful power of the things of God over the feelings depends on their being true to the intellect…. The Bible is not a cunningly devised fable – a work of fiction, addressed to the imagination"; and when another author asserts that intellect precedes sense and there is an intelligible world independent of the human intellect, Crosby returns to defend imagination, fiction, and feeling. " Certainty can only be had in an immediate imaginative grasping of the truth" (275-276). Of course, Crosby does not mean this literally. For him there are two "truths"; first, ordinary information, but, second, truth is also a device to create a response, and in this second kind of truth the question of truth or falsity does not arise.

Crosby and Bushnell do indeed speak so as to create a response: I feel, I have an imaginative grasp, I see intuitively that it is all nonsense. This is a satisfactory reply because my feelings are mine as much as his feelings are his.

1 Donald A. Crosby, *Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language*, 1975, 28; Bushnell, *God in Christ*, 58.

LANGDON GILKEY

The twentieth-century religious language philosophers, as before stated, seem not to have been influenced by Horace Bushnell. Langdon Gilkey (1919-2004) in *Maker of Heaven and Earth,* [1959] 1965, makes no mention of him. Yet one will observe several similarities.

The Vanderbilt and Chicago professor begins by branding the early chapters of *Genesis* as fables and myths, reflecting "the pre-scientific speculation of the Babylonian and Canaanite cultures" (27).[1] Then, to find religious value in *Genesis*, Gilkey empties it and most of the Old Testament of intelligible thought. This is accomplished by his constructing a theory of language that pretends to preserve some religious significance in "all these clearly paradoxical anthropomorphisms" (320).

Analogy

How paradoxical anthropomorphisms, and even Babylonian mythology, can be religiously important without having any cognitive content, Gilkey explains by saying that all language about God is analogical. Or, to quote, "because it is inescapably analogical in character, theological language points to a meaning that transcends any clear and precise description" (67).

This explanation needs to be read carefully. It says, paradoxical anthropomorphisms are useful in religion because all religious language is analogical. But if analogical language has no cognitive content, how can it make anthropomorphisms comprehensible? How indeed could it make even non-anthropomorphic language comprehensible? And if all religious language is analogical, what good is any of it? Mascall, to whom Gilkey devotes a lengthy footnote on page 162, presumably held to Thomas' theory of analogy.[2]

Bushnell and Gilkey apparently use the term *vaguely* to denote any kind of similarity. These men do not seem to consider that the statement of the similarity must be literal, not analogical; and that without the literal basis no analogy is possible. What Gilkey expressly says is that "theological language *points* to a meaning that transcends any clear and precise description" (67). This notion of a pointer Gilkey probably borrowed from Emil Brunner, or some other source in the so-called Neo-orthodox or dialectical school. But pointers are obfuscatory. First, in this connection the verb *point* has no meaning. If I put a mathematical problem on the blackboard, I can point to it, or to a part of it, with my finger, and explain the difficulty; yet pointing does not explain. But if there is no blackboard, how can I point to triangularity, Rosaceae, justice, or relativity? The opposition will reply that I am taking the verb *point* too literally. But if I take it as a figure of speech that means *imply*, so that the relations among certain lines and angles imply a theorem, the opposition will like it even less, for this is an example of reasoning *à outrance*. What then do they mean by it? Apparently nothing. Then second, how can they know that the analogy points to anything? If I stick out my finger at random toward the empty sky, I am not pointing at anything. To know that one is pointing, one must see the object pointed at. But Gilkey's finger points to "a meaning that transcends any clear and precise description." So, the impossible pointer gives us a non-meaning. Gilkey may say that this is not his meaning. Maybe it is not; but who can know, for his meaning or, better, his non-meaning, is unintelligible.

Gilkey constantly emphasizes the unintelligibility of religion. It is a "simultaneous affirmation and

denial” (335); “Whatever we say of him [God] must be affirmed and denied at the same time.” God is both merciful and merciless; he is both omniscient and ignorant; he has no spatial limitations and he is six feet tall. “We cannot hope…to discover how this likeness and unlikeness are resolved;…paradoxes are the only way of speaking about God…. He eludes all our words and categories” (336).

Perhaps then we were wrong in saying that God is merciful and merciless, both spatial and non-spatial. We should have said that God is neither merciful nor merciless, neither spatial nor non-spatial, neither conscious nor unconscious. The name of the object that fits this description is Nothing. But Christians should not be disturbed because “To attempt, therefore, to ‘smooth out the paradox’ is fatal to the meaning of the Christian message” (340).

As the idea of a pointer presumably came from Brunner, and as “smoothing out the paradox” is equivalent to Brunner’s rejection of logic, a paragraph on this background will emphasize the irrationalism of this school of theology. Paul K. Jewett translates from *Die Christliche Lehre von Gott* as follows:

> The purely rational element of thought in logic has the tendency to proceed from any given point in a straight line. Faith, however, constantly bridles this straight line development…. Theological thinking is a rational movement of thought, the logical consequences of which are constantly, at every point, through faith, turned back, curtailed, or destroyed…. Only by constant breaking of systematic unity and logical consistency…does thought arise which may be designated as believing thought.[3]

Now it might be polite to minimize, as hyperbole, the word *constantly* which Brunner uses three times in this short quotation, and also the phrase “at every point.” Surely Brunner allows a few valid syllogisms; he cannot mean that faith permits no inference at any point. Then substituting the words “every once in a while” and “occasionally” the polite critic could give his respectful objections. But the present critic believes that Brunner really meant what he said; and that the hyperbole cannot reduce “at every point” to “every other point.”

How then can faith bridle, curtail, and perhaps destroy its own logical consequences? Suppose we believe (for *pisteuo* means “believe”) that Christ rose from the dead leaving the tomb as empty as the women said; suppose further that this implies (as it does when other Scriptural statements are added to the premises) we, too, shall rise. Is now our belief to curtail this inference and even “turn back” and “destroy” the original premise? What sort of “faith” would this be? If anything, this “faith” or belief would be unbelief. Yet this unbelief, this “constant breaking of systematic unity and logical consistency” Brunner calls “believing thought.” It is not believing; and if it is “thought” at all, the less the better.

Irrationalism

Although unintelligibility leaves no message at all, Gilkey, as well as Brunner, will not retreat from this fundamental irrationalism. Religious language is without exception mythological:

> Myth is a form of religious language which unites the three concepts…of analogy, revelation, and paradox…. Thus when Christians speak of God as Creator…[or when they say] “he sends his Son into the world,”…he speaks through the prophets…this mythical language is analogical because it…deliberately denies that the language is to be interpreted literally [342-343].
>
> Like the symbol of the fall, creation has no inherent and original factual content [345]. If the “myth” of creation is taken to be literally and simply true,…then it loses all its religious character [347].

On the next page Gilkey twice repeats his contention that if creation is understood to be a literal fact, like an eclipse of the sun in 1955, “it has no religious character…. As an objective truth about

the world's beginning, it has no deep reverberating bearing on our own existence and destiny." To this one may reply that a literal creation has most certainly, if not an analogical and meaningless deep reverberation, a most important and immediate bearing on man's life and destiny. It has as much bearing on our future hopes and present conduct as the literal truth of a bodily resurrection. But there is a more fundamental flaw, or at least omission, in these pages. The quotations assume a knowledge of what "religious characteristics" are. Where or how did Professor Gilkey get his concept of the religious? If he can clearly state his concept, by what argument can he maintain it? He gives no argument. He is, of course, at liberty to invent any kind of religion he likes. He is even at some liberty to misuse English and deny that people of other religions are religious. He may compose, as professors of psychology have sometimes done, a questionnaire by which to test the religiosity of a hundred students. In one class it was a Lutheran minister who was determined to be the least religious – that is, who diverged the most widely from the professor's notion of what religion should be. And this is all that Gilkey's language means. Orthodox Christians are not religious. Gilkey is not Christian.

In fairness, for there is no profit in misrepresenting one's opponent, one must note that in the last four pages of his book Gilkey himself seems to have an incipient qualm. He asks, "If all our knowledge of God is in terms of analogies, can we be said to possess any significant knowledge of God at all?" This is a good, a very good question; but the answer is pitiful. "The point where God is most directly known," he says, "is in historical revelation" (359). Naturally, for Gilkey, historical revelation is not the historical event of God's speaking intelligible sentences to Moses or Isaiah. Nor can it be literal statements describing the Exodus or the Babylonian captivity. He must mean uninterpreted occurrences. We cannot accept Moses' explanation of the Exodus; we can know only that there was an Exodus. Perhaps we do not know that there was an Exodus, for there is so much inaccuracy and mythology in the Old Testament. But let us suppose that somehow we know that something, like an eclipse, happened. Now, somehow or other, in such events as these – and in particular he mentions the person of Jesus Christ, if only we could believe anything the early Christians imagined about him – we see the love of God. We learn that God is love – of course he is also hate – and love is not symbolic. "The personal recreative love of God in Christ…is the one unsymbolic and direct idea of God that Christians possess" (359-360).

Now, these seemingly beautiful words, as found in the matrix of Gilkey's book, are totally without meaning. The Apostle John says, "Herein is love... that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." But *Son, sent,* and especially *propitiation* are all mythological. What Gilkey means by *love*, if anything at all, is something else. Now, if indeed "the love of God," in the matrix of Gilkey's theory, conveys any modicum of meaning, that meaning cannot have been ascertained by any inspection of uninterpreted historical occurrences. Consider two points.

First, observation of the historical process never produces any ethical or theological ideas. World history, far from showing that God is love, rather supports Bertrand Russell's conclusion that the world is unspeakably horrible. Not only did Hitler exterminate five million Jews: Stalin starved ten million Ukrainians to death; and the Chinese Communists massacred twenty or thirty million Chinese, plus nearly all the population of Tibet. At this point someone will ask, What about the person of Jesus Christ? A good question; but the answer is not Gilkey's. If we have no verbal explanation of the person and work of Jesus Christ, he is but another instance of the universal reign of injustice. The point is that observation of the historical process does not come near proving that the love of God is the one unsymbolic and direct idea that Christians possess.

Therefore, second, this beautiful phrase has no meaning at all. Besides the impossibility of deriving this idea from history, and also besides the general rejection of the Scripture's literal

message, there is another reason for saying that the love of God, as Gilkey explains it, is meaningless. The reason is that the alleged idea leads us nowhere. It points to nothing. Does the love of God imply that as Jesus rose from the dead, so shall we? How does one find out what *faith, or repentance, or sanctification* is, from this vapid phrase? Does the phrase "God is love" even tell us anything about God? Of course, if we accept the literal and propositional revelation of the Bible, we can have an extensive theology; but on Gilkey's view we have neither a concept of love nor any notion of why it is important. In the very same paragraph Gilkey had also said, "In Christ God is not known as he is in himself." Hence nothing that Jesus is supposed to have done teaches us anything about God.

Is not this sufficient to dispose of Gilkey's mythical language and irrational religion?

[1] The factuality of this assertion is convincingly contested by Oswald T. Allis, *The Old Testament,* 1972, "Comparing the Incomparable," 341-378.

[2] For a destructive analysis of that theory, see Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, and *Religion, Reason, and Revelation.*

[3] *Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation,* 1954, 104-105.

INTERLUDE

There are other authors whose theory of language is worked out in somewhat greater detail than Gilkey's. Before considering them, however, it seems proper to sample the great number of those who fall into the general category without originating notable improvements in theory. The purpose is to take note of types of evidence by which they support their views.

Many of these authors mention the first eleven chapters of *Genesis*, and in particular the first three. When they say that chapter one is not a cosmological theory, they speak the truth, if by the phrase they mean a very detailed description of the formation of the solar system. This, however, is an irrelevance, just as much so as if one were to say that the invasions of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar in 2 *Kings* are unhistorical because the book gives so little earlier and later Assyrian and Babylonian history. The mere fact that *Genesis* does not state the exact speed of light does not impugn the statement that "he made the stars also."

Another instance of poor logic relates to Cain. The author is interested in finding inconsistencies in the Bible. So he argues that Cain's expressed fear of being killed by anyone who finds him implies that there were inhabitants of the Earth who were not children of Adam and Eve. The gentleman should have taken an elementary course in logic. His poor thinking ability is also evident from another angle. If there were people not descendants of Adam and Eve, especially if at all numerous, it is not likely that everyone would want to slay him. Most of them would not have known that Cain was a murderer. But Cain's brothers knew. Accordingly, by the Biblical account everyone would want to kill him because everyone had the same parents. Perhaps the modern author thought that Cain had no brothers. He may have had none at that time. Vengeance might be delayed; but it would come because Adam "begat sons and daughters."

The account of the flood also stimulates a liberal to imagine a major inconsistency. As ordinarily read, the flood began on a.n. 2/17/600. It rained 24 hours a day for 40 days. After that, the waters prevailed for 150 days. On 7/17/600 the ark rested. The waters began to recede. On 10/1/600 the tops of the mountains could be seen. Then Noah on three occasions let loose a bird. The third time the bird did not return. Things were fairly dry by a.n. 1/1/601. And on 2/27/601, they all came out of the ark. So the account reads. But somewhere between the lines this imaginative author discovers an alternate version that limits the flood to 61 days.

This sort of thing, if it were true, could legitimately be used as evidence for Wellhausen's documentary theory; but it is totally irrelevant to the thesis that *Genesis* and all religious literature is written in mythological language. The alleged contradictions in the Bible are more clearly contradictory if the language is literal. Then one can plainly say, this statement is false; or even that, when the two are simply different rather than contradictory, both are false. But inconsistencies never will prove that the language is mythological.

What then can prove that this or that book is mythology? We call Homer mythological because of a combination of two reasons: He talks about the gods and we do not believe what he says about them. Were we polytheistic believers we would not dismiss his stories as myths; and when he writes on the Trojan War we may doubt his accuracy, but we acknowledge that there was a Trojan War. Now, it is possible to treat the Bible this way. Those who call the early chapters of *Genesis* mythological do so

because they do not believe what *Genesis* says about God and his actions. To say a religious book is myth simply means, I don't believe it. In this sense the books of *Samuel*, *Kings* , and *Chronicles* can also be called mythological. But here some embarrassment arises. These books are, or claim to be, history, and they are as literal as any history books are. From this it follows that these books are both literal and mythological; and this is not what the language theologians want. For them mythology is something like a fable. It is an analogy of an inspirational character that produces a moral or otherwise desirable reaction. Now, the books of *Samuel* and *Kings* are clearly not fables like Aesop's; they are history written in literal language. Because literal, and because one believes them true, they are as inspirational as, indeed more stimulating than, a merely fanciful tale.

The numerous unnamed authors referred to in this Interlude differ among themselves in several details. Each one can be evaluated only on the basis of his own words. But a survey shows that their range of difference stretches from the easily understood assertion that the Bible is literal language and often false to the other extreme that the Bible is mythological throughout and always true, in a mythological sense of true. Those who represent this latter extreme face two problems: First, their own religious writings are not literally true, and this makes their arguments unintelligible; and second, since history can be religious, and since mathematics was a religious and soteric activity for the Pythagoreans, these authors have a hard time finding anything literal in English, French, or symbolic logic.

Those in the middle, who take *Genesis* as myth but *Kings* as literal, face the problem of stating a criterion by which to maintain this distinction. If they say religious language alone is mythological, they imply that *Kings* is not a religious book. As a matter of fact, they should also say that the first chapter of *Genesis* is not religious, for cosmology is as irreligious as history.

A particular example, slightly different in subject matter though similar in its logic, may clarify the difficulty. In the recent past several writers have said that the purpose of the Bible is to present salvation in Christ. But since *Kings* and *Chronicles* do not clearly do so, these books are not the Word of God. No doubt most of *John's Gospel* is the Word of God, but very little of *Chronicles*. It is right here that the pointed question must be put. What criterion is used to distinguish religious literature from non-religious? What criterion is used to determine that the purpose of the Bible precludes historical books from being the Word of God?

Most of the authors who make these distinctions offer no criterion at all. If they did, a Muslim or Hindu would reply, "that may be your idea of religion, but it is not mine"; and a Christian would reply, "that is your notion of what is excluded from salvation in Christ, but it is not mine."

There is indeed a way for these people to avoid logical difficulties, paradox, and analogy. To quote one of them: "It is possible to lead a religious life without discussing it or verbalizing very much about it." If a person never says anything, he obviously does not flounder in fallacious implications. No one can refute him, for he says nothing to refute. What one can truly say of him, however, is that he is not a Christian, for Christ commanded his followers to make disciples, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever that I have commanded you" (*Matthew* 28:20). Christians *must* "verbalize" (to use contemporary gobbledygook).

WILLIAM HORDERN

Speaking of God (New York, 1964) is a most interesting attempt to expose the difficulties of some modern theories of language. Like his predecessors, Hordern (1920-) is more successful, very successful, in refuting anti-religious views than in establishing a solid base for Christian truth. The Christian can, however, learn much from both his success and his failure.

Hordern notes that there is a contemporary stress on communication, both in advertising and politics, but with this there is also a debasement of the language in that words have become so elastic that no one understands anyone else. Everybody favors peace, freedom, and democracy (including the Democratic Republic of East Germany), but the words are used in contradictory senses. Someone said that poor people are denied psychiatric care, not because of their poverty, but because the psychiatrist cannot understand what they say. One of the main causes of the debasement of language is the sin of wanting to control the actions of other people, which can most easily be done by propaganda.

Now, Christianity has a message to be understood; hence Christians must be concerned about language. The question is, How can we use words to speak about God? If we have coined words to speak of earthly things, how can we use those words to apply to heavenly things? The creeds have an historic strength as a congregation repeats them; but the terminology is an offense to modern man. The language alienates him. Candidates for the ministry have a hard time subscribing to the denomination's creed – if they still have any scruples against perjury – yet they want to take part in what they consider to be in harmony with the denomination's real purpose. So they pledge their vows with their fingers crossed.

The fundamentalists resisted this claim to preserve what somebody supposed was the real purpose of the church, to retain what is essential and discard miracles for modern science. The liberals won, but only to be eclipsed by Neo-orthodoxy and its myths. But if all is myth and symbol, where is truth?

If people in general found it difficult to discover what the liberals really believed, it is harder to find out what the Neo-orthodox believe. They say they believe in " creation," but that creation tells us nothing about the universe. Words, of course, are symbols, but this is not what the Neo-orthodox mean when they say the fall of man is a symbol. Ordinary symbolism and figures of speech can be put into literal language, but the Neo-orthodox doctrines cannot, and these theologians cannot tell us what the symbols symbolize. For example, Paul Tillich said that the only non-symbolic statement that one can make about God is "God is being itself." Then someone replied (1) this, too, is symbolic; (2) being itself is not the Christian God; (3) the phrase is not a statement, but a definition, and one that is at odds with 95 percent of religious tradition. Tillich then amended his statement about God to "the only non-symbolic statement about God is that everything we say about God is symbolic."

Language Analysis

Theologians have perhaps been dilatory in recognizing language analysis. Formerly Christians faced the charge that their theology was false or untrue; now they must face the charge that it is meaningless. On the other hand, the analysts, who claim to examine language as it is commonly used, ought to be willing to consider ordinary theological language. For the most part they slight it or ignore

it. Those who ignore it, in that they dismiss it with disparaging epithets, place themselves in a peculiar position. Their epithets are emotional; certainly they are evaluative; but on their own showing such language is meaningless – they are talking nonsense. In addition, their verification principle is itself metaphysical and cannot be verified; yet from this non-verifiable principle they deduce their system.

After some stimulating analysis of the analytical philosophy Hordern begins to prepare for the exposition of his own position. He does not minimize, rather he very clearly points out, the difficulties in defending theological language. Predicates such as *angry*, or verbs like *know* and *will* have strange meanings when God is the subject. If we say God made or created the world, the meaning is not the same as a statement that Smith made a chair or table; we can point in distinction to something Smith did not make, but to nothing God did not make. In fact, we cannot point to anything God made all by himself, for everything now has been modified by natural processes. Our knowledge is *temporally* conditioned, and for this reason does not apply to the eternal God.

If theological language is not pure nonsense, one must give a clear answer to the question, *How* can theological language communicate meaning? The secular philosophers who have attempted to answer usually have little understanding of theology and as a result they present a caricature. The theologians, on the other hand, know very little philosophy and as a result they are incompetent.

Hordern's key to the solution is the concept of *conviction* as opposed to emotion. Conviction describes the state of mind of a religious person better than emotion does. The theologian is convinced. But, further, conviction presupposes a convictor, an irresistible power outside oneself. Convictional language points to a reality as much as empirical language does. Even in science there is conviction about objectivity, and also conviction that science is good. The Logical Positivist expressed his convictions by selecting his verification principle. He was convinced that nothing was important beyond the space-time world.

Note how this convictional theory leaves the Logical Positivist breathless. He had argued that God and providence are meaningless because no experiment can invalidate them. When evil is used as an argument against God, the theist makes some unprovable assertions that this evil eventually produces greater good. But though the Positivist scorns the theist on this account, he himself uses the same argument, for he argues: Nothing can falsify the scientific principle of order in the universe; for when a difficulty arises (such as the perturbations of the Moon or the fickleness of the weather), the scientist claims that the present experiments are defective in one way or another; there was an error somewhere; and then he looks for new experiments until he finds one he thinks fits.

The later Wittgenstein had spoken of language games. Unfortunately he did not define *game*, and he seems to have used the word in several senses. But at any rate, if the Analytic philosophy makes use of some concept of games, it cannot, as Hordern emphasizes, rule out the theological language game. Baseball has its rules; but this does not make football impossible. As there are different rules for different games, so, too, theology establishes its own rules – science cannot establish them for it. Yet theology can prescribe some rules to science, for the latter, as was shown earlier, cannot claim any value for itself. The language of values is theological language. For this reason, though the theory of language games embarrasses the Positivists, it does not fit theology. Theology not only evaluates science, it gives direction to all of life. It does not answer questions left over by science, nor does it offer an explanation of the universe; rather it is a means by which a man can give purpose and direction to his life.

Along with conviction and convictor, Hordern will build his theory of language on its use in a *community*. Analytic philosophy usually ignores the persons who speak and their community. But

even scientific language becomes nonsense outside the scientific community. The Christian community is the church. Theology cannot be understood if its church background is ignored. Of course, the Gospel must be preached to those outside the church. Some Christians wish to lay a foundation for this preaching in the evidence of natural theology. Then when the evidence becomes weak or exhausted, *faith* takes over. Faith is a sign of weakness. But, remarks Hordern, in the New Testament faith is something strong and powerful. It is neither emotive nor subjective. It is not a rational act of choosing the most probable hypothesis. On the contrary, "Here I stand!" This is grace, not the "Will to Believe."

Wittgenstein himself had admitted that the giving of reasons must come to an end somewhere. If a person is unwilling to play the [scientific] game, no further reasoning can force him to. On such grounds as these Hordern can infer that faith is not belief on insufficient evidence: It is belief without any evidence. How does one decide what evidence is? What evidence can one have to prove his evidence is evidence? The very acceptance of evidence is faith.

Ayer admits the same thing in acknowledging that we cannot logically justify the principle of induction, nor that the future will resemble the past. Induction itself, says Ayer, sets the standard of rationality.

Hordern's argument in this section of his book is not altogether clear. Nor it is altogether complete. He seems to say that one man's faith is as good as another's. This, to be sure, is enough to puncture the arrogance of the Positivists. But the present writer would desire to go further and insist, on the basis of the thousand-and-first crow, that faith in induction is a very poor type of faith. But to embarrass the Positivists it is enough to say, as Hordern does, that Western society has advanced in science because most people believe it to be good and important. But the Hindus have a different concept of reality, even though they presumably have similar sense organs. Therefore the Hindus will sleep on a bed of spikes to show that pain is unimportant.

Returning to his constructive theory, Hordern reiterates that theological language points to a convictor. This convictor is known to be a mystery. When a Christian theologian speaks of God as transcendent, he uses the word as a symbol of the mystery of God. Resembling somewhat Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence, this experience of mystery is the root of religion. A mystery is not a riddle to be solved, says Hordern, it is a secret. But even when revealed, it still does not become "transparent" to men. One might say that a mystery is unknowable, or, better, that mystery is not a matter of knowledge at all.

Such a defense of religion against scientism is popular in this last half of the twentieth century. But though a defense of "religion," it is of little value to Christianity. For Christianity, a mystery is indeed a secret, and when God tells us the secret we *know* it. "Behold I tell you a mystery," Paul writes, "we shall not all sleep." No doubt most of the world's population believes that all must die; but the Christian on the basis of God's revelation knows that at Christ's return some will not die. This is a known proposition, a known truth – and easily understood. Those who deny it must understand in order to deny. Now, indeed this known truth may stimulate worship or awe; but it itself is an object of knowledge.

By removing God's secrets from the sphere of knowledge, does not Hordern produce a religion with which the Logical Positivists have no quarrel? Would not these scientists allow anyone to have any feelings he pleases? The difference between the Logical Positivists and Hordern is not with respect to knowledge, but with respect to the evaluation of feelings. In awe Hordern asks, Why should there be any world at all? Obviously (though it is not so obvious) anything in the universe might not have existed. Science can tell us why things are as they are today, given their antecedents, but it

cannot answer the basic question why there is anything at all. The person who tries to brush this question aside, Hordern insists, is not unintelligent: He lacks a reverence for reality. The Analytic philosophy is totally devoid of mystery or worship. It restricts language to what can be said clearly. But clear speech and the cosmological argument are not religious. *Romans* 1:19-20 have nothing to do with the cosmological argument: They refer to awe. "The sense of mystery is no proof of God. It is compatible with many views of God, and even the atheist may be aware of the mystery of the universe…. But it [the sense of mystery] helps us to understand the use of theological language" (120).

At this point one may stand in awe of a mystery that supports Christianity and atheism equally well. If this aids us in understanding the use of theological language, have we not already accepted Logical Positivism?

Clearly Hordern thinks he is refuting his opponents. Actually his position is very much the same thing. The theologian must say the unsayable. In poetry, art, and liturgy we can sing what we cannot say. The *Te Deum* is not paying metaphysical compliments to Deity. Language is conditioned by space and time; the words fail because they are finite. We say what we do not mean. We must use analogies and then erode them. Yet "fatherhood" is a better analogy than "cousinhood"; but we cannot find the line that divides the misleading part of the analogy from the good part. Theology is paradoxical. College students reject theological language, but they are moved by the Lord's Supper (120-128).

But, then, college students are often irrational.

Naturally Hordern would not look with favor upon the objections here leveled against him. He tries to avoid them by "The Personal Language Game" (chapter VIII). But some of it seems to contradict what he has already asserted.

Dogmatic theology and skepticism are both bad. There is a base of knowledge from which faith can speak (*knowledge*, he says). Skeptics say that until one has non-analogical knowledge, one cannot even know that something is an analogy. But there is knowledge and there are analogies, he asserts with emphasis, evading the skeptic's, and as well the dogmatician's, point. Equally without support he asserts that there is a "personal language game" with its own logic, a game that points directly to God. God has revealed that personal language is the key to speaking about him. Science cannot speak of persons. Mind is only one part of a person. We want to know not only how someone's mind works, but what are his hopes, motivations, and ambitions. For personal language we must listen to the Existentialists, rather than to the Language Analysts. But if we listen to the Existentialists, it is not likely that we shall hear anything. Do they explain this personal logic, so different from Aristotelian logic? Does personal logic have 24 valid syllogisms, or none at all? Does it have middle terms, contraries, and subalterns? An assertion that personal language has its own logic requires an exposition of its rules. Hordern speaks of it as a game. Games have rules. Or is this personal language nothing else than a different vocabulary? Astronomy uses the words *star* and *planet*; botany speaks about *internal phloem. Brown* is not a personal word, but *sympathetic* and *angry* are. Then one asks, which verbs are personal and which impersonal? A clock runs; and a boy runs, too. Without explaining any of this, Hordern says, "The normal subject-object division that occurs in our language about things is absent when we are speaking about ourselves, or, if used, must be recognized as having a different logic" (137). To invent an example, "John is sympathetic" contains neither a subject nor a predicate; and because personal, it implies by its own logic that Scotchmen are stingy.

There are some 50 or 60 pages more on which Hordern extols personal language. Some of his remarks, especially in opposition to Tillich, are valuable. But their matrix is a language game that has no rules. Why should anyone want to play such a game? Chess is infinitely better.

A recent book is *Words and the WORD* 1971. Professor Hamilton's (1917-) work is not so detailed as Hordern's nor so blatantly irrational as Gilkey's. He develops his view carefully, step by step; but we may conclude that the results are about the same.

His basic view of language, not merely religious language, but all language, is stated clearly: "All language grows out of mythic thinking and still bears the marks of its origin" (86). This thesis is repeated with some frequency and these other passages fill out his thought. Quoting Wheelwright with approval, he says, " Myth, then, is not in the first instance a fiction imposed on one's already given world, but is a way of apprehending that world. Genuine myth is a matter of perspective first, invention second" (46).

Mythology

Doubtless there is some truth to this; but it should also be noted that the myth-makers did not recognize themselves as myth-makers. They believed they were speaking the truth. When a man throws his newborn son into the fiery arms of Moloch, he must have very strong convictions. Only later ages can call the stories myths, for only they believe that the myths are false. If now Hamilton or someone wishes to call all religion mythical, he must mean that it is false. Let us trace it through his exposition and see.

To bring myth into the present century Hamilton writes, "Each life re-enacts in part the history of the human race. Children experience to some degree the formation of a meaningful world through the mythic power of language" (47). Here the expressions "in part" and "to some degree" are extremely vague. It may be that Wordsworth as a child invented myths for his later odes, but the present writer does not remember anything remotely approaching myth-making. Mythology was not at all "a marked characteristic" of my childhood. Nor was it ever evident among the boys I played with. But however this may be, and however Homer and the Babylonians mythologized, it does not follow that all language grows out of mythic thinking. Nor does anything else prove that all words still bear the marks of a mythological origin. If all language bears the marks of mythological origin, and if the words *cat, triangle, baseball*, and *jetplane* are a part of language, they must show marks of mythology. A theory that makes such an implausible assertion ought to be particularly careful to point out these marks. Hamilton does not do so.

Hamilton seems to adopt Ernst Cassirer's view that

> Intelligence…is not man's decisive characteristic. What really distinguishes him from other animals is his ability to construct symbols…. He does not first understand the world, and then learn how to put his knowledge into words. Rather his invention of verbal symbols provides the possibility of his having knowledge [45].

But is not this patently backwards? It takes intelligence to construct symbols; only because man is distinguished from "other" animals can he do so. Moreover, before a man constructs a symbol, he must have something in mind to symbolize. A primitive man would never invent the sound or symbol *cat*, unless he had first seen a twitching tail and heard its other end say "meow." Does anyone believe that the savage said to himself, "*Cat* is such a nice sound that I shall use it to symbolize whatever

crosses my path tomorrow at noon"?

Hamilton emphasizes mythology because his theory of religion requires it. However, religious language today is not strictly mythological. Hamilton proposes two advances in the history of language before it can serve the purpose of present day, and even some ancient, religion. The first step is to dilute or refine myth into poetry. This advance gives us a God who really exists, as opposed to mythological gods who do not.[1]

Without paying too much attention to Hamilton's view of poetry, we do better to study what he considers truly religious language. It is a step beyond poetry, namely, parable. "Christian faith… gladly admits…the literal acceptance of myth untenable," yet man by reason of symbolic language remains "a myth-making creature." Then, he continues, Christian faith gives "no privileged instruction about 'what the case is' in the created world" (67). The "case" of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is thus excluded from knowledge. Admittedly the creation of the world is excluded. The role of so-called Christian faith is for Hamilton limited to "essential knowledge about the world as divinely created. It also gives him assurance of the human meaning of his existence. It mediates this meaning beyond the reaches of his own consciousness…."

But if literal language is ruled out, no one can know that literally God created the world. "Assurance of the human meaning of his existence" would satisfy no man. At least a thoughtful man would want to know what the meaning was. And how a contentless faith can "mediate" an unknown meaning beyond the reaches of consciousness is a problem for the psychiatrist. No wonder Hamilton eschews plain, literal, intelligible language in his religion.

Parables are supposed to solve this problem. Note, however, that a theory of language, not simply a hermeneutic principle for Biblical exegesis, ought to show how mythological language developed into poetical language. After all, in Homer the two languages are the same language; and if poetry gives us an existing God, why can't we find Zeus on Mount Olympus? Such a theory of language ought also to show how poetic language develops into parabolic language. Hamilton does not do this. Cannot parables as well as poetry be mythological? It is not that there are different languages: There are different subjects of conversation, expressed in different literary styles, all in one language. This confusion between subject-matter and style seems to be the result of a decision to reject literal truth in religion. Hamilton is interested in preparing the ground for an attack against plenary and verbal inspiration.

> "Dictation" theories of revelation sometimes seem to assume that God communicates his Word through vocables, so that understanding the exact sense of an aggregate of propositions is to receive the Word of God. This is surely to bind the divine Word to the measure of human words… [75].

This is a sentence the propaganda devices of which require more than a paragraph to sort out. What he says about "dictation theories" is probably not just "sometimes" true, but rather always. However, it is also true of some theories that are not " dictation theories." B.B. Warfield argued against the modern concept of dictation as practiced in a business office, but he held firmly to the point that God communicates his Word through "vocables."[2] Then, second, the idea that if God speaks in words, he is somehow "bound" by an alien force, is a thoroughgoing misrepresentation. The words themselves are mere signs or symbols. They designate ideas or truths. If God cannot use symbols to express his truth, he is indeed bound and gagged. A God who cannot speak is not omnipotent. In fact in such a case God would be more limited than man, for a man can speak. Then, further, if God cannot speak, he cannot speak parables.

The Bible as the Word of God

It is quite clear that Hamilton does not accept the Bible as the Word of God. "The fact that words are in the Bible…does not mean that our reading of them necessarily must yield authoritative statements that we can proceed forthwith to identify with the Word of God" (76). Well, of course, not *necessarily*, for some people some of the time do not understand the words they read; so that "our reading" the words, if we are such people, does not necessarily yield correct propositions. The phraseology here is again propaganda, for the important question is not whether some people misread the Bible, but whether the words and sentences of the Bible are authoritative statements because they are true, because they are the words of God. It is obviously poor thinking to attack a theory of the inspiration and truth of the Scriptures on the ground that some people do not understand the words. Must one take a textbook on calculus as mythological, poetic, or parabolic and not literally true, because some high school students cannot understand it? It is by such invalid reasoning that Hamilton rejects the Scripture as revelation. He says, "Were this the case [identifying the words of the Bible with the Word of God], then the Bible, rather than being that inspired *record*…would be the written law of God" (76).

Now there is a sense in which the Bible is an inspired record. It inerrantly records God's revelation to Abraham and the wars of David, King of Israel. But in addition to being a record of divine revelations, it is itself the complete revelation. As the opening section of the *Westminster Confession* (determinative of the evangelical position) says, "it pleased the Lord…to commit the same [earlier revelations] wholly unto writing…those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased." Thus in contrast with Hamilton's denial, the Bible is indeed the written law of God.

In spite of the fact that Hamilton wants to escape myth through poetry to parable, he continues to say, "The language of Scripture…would have been incomprehensible otherwise…."(89), that is, unless mythic patterns had been used. Ananias in Damascus would not have understood the directions to Straight Street, had it not been mythological in form.

> Sumerian, Babylonian, Phoenician, and Egyptian myths [were] taken up into the biblical accounts of creation [and] Gnostic myths [are] present in the N.T. descriptions of Christ.[3] … The biblical language employs the imagery of myth, while transforming its content.[4] Creation myths in which the gods wrested apart earth and heaven out of the body of the monster Chaos account for some of the phrasing of the biblical account of creation [89].

Clearly, however much Hamilton may want to go beyond myth, he does not seem to get very far away, for on the next page he says, "Lacking the mythic pattern [of Gnosticism] that originally produced the necessary terminology, we should not be able to speak of Christ's death and resurrection" (90).

Is not this complete nonsense? Am I dependent on Gnostic or other myths when I speak of Roman soldiers laying Jesus on a cross and pounding nails into his hands and feet? Certainly I understood this in childhood long before I ever heard of Gnosticism. Nor am I at all sure that Matthew knew anything about Gnosticism. If anyone now replies that Matthew and I did not need to have known Gnosticism because we use language already formed, let him explain to us how mythology formed the words: *nails, soldiers, cross, spear*, and *death*. Similarly, what mythology is needed for Peter to see that the tomb was empty and later to see Jesus in Galilee and talk with him? Is it not therefore complete nonsense to say that we could not talk about Christ's death unless mythology had given us these words?

One hardly escapes the impression that the author does not treat his opponents fairly. He says,

> Yet because revelation is given in human words, it cannot be more precise than language allows. [How true! A perfect

tautology. But is God, who produced language, unable to use it with perfect precision?] The belief that the Bible consists of statements of *literal truth* [his italics], therefore, is ill-conceived. [The *therefore* is a logical fallacy.] The notion of literal truth is quite correct if we oppose literal to the mythical…. In this sense we must say that God *literally* created the world…. It is quite another matter, though, if we insist that all the statements of Scripture are literally true… [91].

This sort of argument is hardly fair to the Reformation view because no one from the time of Moses to the present ever said that all statements are strictly literal. Did Luther, Quenstedt, Gaussen, or Warfield ever say so? Of course there are figures of speech, metaphors, anthropomorphisms, and the like. But these would be meaningless if there were no literal statements to give them meaning. For example, 2 *Chronicles* 16:9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth," is ludicrous if taken literally: little eyeballs rolling over the dusty ground. But unless the statement, God is omniscient, is literal, the figure has nothing to signify. Surely Hamilton did not publish his book to remind us that the Bible contains some figures of speech. And yet his argument here depends on the alleged fact that someone said "all the statements of Scripture are literally true" (91).

Consider the footnote on page 91:

"Literal" is not synonymous with "historical." Inspiration does not imply that what is inspired must be understood literally, and even less that everything must be viewed as having actually happened…. To put it bluntly, to accept everything reported in the Bible as having actually happened, one must tamper with the text.

These words which Hamilton with approval quotes from H.M. Kuitert are unclear. The language is typical of liberals who want to appear conservative to orthodox people, while they undermine the truth of the Scripture. When Kuitert says "everything reported," does he refer to metaphors, to statements made by Satan, or does "everything reported" refer to everything reported as having actually occurred? The first two possibilities are puerile. The third is a repudiation of evangelical religion. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the latter is the meaning intended. For example, 2 *Peter* claims that it was written by Peter. About such a claim Hamilton writes,

For a long time now, every author has been considered to have a proprietary right over his works. But the biblical books came out of a milieu in which such a concept was unknown, and where there was no issue of truth or falsehood involved in using a revered name in connection with writings by other hands [92].

This statement is not true even of pagan scholarship, for the Alexandrian philosophers carefully distinguished between thirty-six genuine Platonic dialogues and ten spurious. See also E.M.B. Green, *Second Peter Reconsidered* (Tyndale Press, 1960), where he writes to the effect that forgeries were not cordially received as the critics maintain, but that the sub-apostolics distinguished themselves and even Apollos from the apostles, and deposed the author of *Paul and Thekla* for his imposture. Another instance was Serapion, who banned the *Gospel of Peter* from his church because by careful investigation he had discovered it was a forgery.

After his remarks on the authorship of spurious writings, Hamilton comes quickly to his solution to the problem of how language with its mythical inheritance can express divine truth. It is done by parable. The book of *Jonah*, he says, does not report actual occurrences. Its literary form shows that it is a parable. (There never was a Jonah. I guess there was no Nineveh, either.) Everyone acknowledges that Christ taught in parables.[5] Not everything in the Bible, Hamilton acknowledges, is a parable; the apocalyptic visions are not. But "if we are to look for a 'key' mode of language-usage in Scripture, then parable fits this position much more suitably than myth does" (100).

Let us immediately agree. There are also other sentences in the book, which, if detached from their context, can be understood in an orthodox sense. So, it is true that parable is more suitable than mythology. But is parable more suitable than, and a substitute for, literal language? Hamilton has made the wrong comparison. He has here avoided mentioning the weak link in his argument; for if

there is no literal truth of which the parable is an illustration, it has no referent and becomes pointless.

It would indeed seem that Hamilton has made parables pointless and meaningless. He says,

> A parable…assumes that the divine reality its human words open to us, though literally beyond our comprehension, can actually be revealed to us by means of human words. Thus many of the parables of Jesus begin, "The kingdom of God is like…." Certainly the comparison is no more than a comparison. The kingdom of heaven cannot be brought down to earth for our inspection; it remains always a mystery. Yet Jesus could say… "It is given unto you to know the mysteries…" [96].

This quotation is peculiar. It begins by saying that the sense of the parable, that is, the divine reality it reveals, is literally beyond our comprehension, but ends with Christ's assertion that the disciples should understand it. In the middle is the word *mystery*: The kingdom remains always a mystery. But mysteries are not necessarily impossible or even difficult to understand. In the New Testament *mystery* does not refer to something we call *mysterious* in English. For example, 1 *Corinthians* 15:51 states a mystery: It may be hard for some people to *believe*, but there is no difficulty in *understanding* it.

Then, too, it is false to say that "the kingdom of heaven cannot be brought down to earth for our inspection." Christ did just that. Also the kingdom remains with us, and we inspect it daily.

But once more, if "the comparison is no more than a comparison," or, better, if it is as much as a comparison, the particular truth illustrated by the comparison must be understandable, for otherwise the parable's language would not reveal the truth to us.

In conclusion, first, Hamilton's theory of language is destructive of Christian truth. Surely language, as God's gift to Adam, has as its purpose, not only communication among men, but communication between man and God. God spoke words to Adam and Adam spoke words to God. Since this is the divine intention, words or language is adequate. To be sure, on occasion, even on frequent occasions, sinful man cannot find the right words to express his thought; but this is a defect of man, not an inadequacy of language. The Bible does not countenance a theory that originates language in pagan mythology with the result that divine truth is unintelligible.

Similarly, second, on Hamilton's theory God remains unknowable. The chief difficulty with myths is not that they are literally false, but rather that their alleged non-literal "truth" is meaningless. Hamilton fled from myth to poetry to parable in order to arrive at some sort of revelation, but he never succeeded in showing how parables convey truth or what truths parables convey. Their "message" remains unintelligible.

Third, Hamilton has rejected the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration and placed himself outside the bounds of historical evangelicalism.

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1 This sentence is not given as Hamilton's own words. It is a brief interpretation of pages 61-62, 67*ff*. Any different interpretation would be hard put to explain how poetic language is intermediate between mythology and Hamilton's religion.

2 On the liberal caricature of Calvinistic theology, see Religion, Reason, and Revelation.

3 For a definitive refutation, see J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*.

4 Does it? How? With what result?

5 A common criterion for distinguishing a parable of Christ from something he reports as having happened is the absence in the first and the presence in the second of names: A man that was a householder went out early to hire laborers, or a certain king made a marriage feast for his son, versus the blood of Abel…of Zachariah, son of Barachiah, whom you slew, or other references to Old Testament events.

A CHRISTIAN CONSTRUCTION

Empiricism

To prepare for a positive formulation of a Christian theory of language, the first thing is to clear the ground of empiricism. Many Christian evidentialists, unwilling to accept liberal or Neo-orthodox positions, are nonetheless unwilling also to hack away and dig out the roots of non-Christian branches of learning. When a non-empirical apologetic is presented to them, they almost always reply with the boldest and most naive *petitio principii*: "Don't you have to read the Bible?"

A serious apologist cannot ask this question until after he has defined sensation and explained its relation to perception. Apologetics or Christian philosophy has the task of formulating a complete and consistent theory from beginning to – if not end, at least as far as one can go. But it must start at the beginning. When someone asks, "Don't you read your Bible?" he is assuming that a Bible is certain sensations of black and white without combination, arrangement, or intellectual interpretation. Now, this is clearly not the case. The perception of a Bible is somehow ordered and interpreted. The apologist must explain *how*. An empirical appeal, like the sight of a Bible, cannot be the beginning of an epistemological theory. If the apologist cannot show how perception of a Bible develops from sensation, he has no basis for his empiricism. He has no defense against a Spiritual rationalism. The former, so we apprehend, lands him either in Behaviorism or chaos – which are much the same thing. The latter provides for an intelligible message from God.

Even some non-empiricists try to connect sensation with perception. Brand Blanshard, an Hegelian, not a Christian, in his brilliant volumes on *The Nature of Thought* makes an excellent attempt. In chapter one, paragraph three, he states, "Perception is that experience in which, on the warrant of something given in sensation at the time, we unreflectingly take some object to be before us." Note the words *given* and *unreflectingly*. Here is *das Gegebenes* by which Hegel pointed out the fatal flaw in Kantianism.

Now, Blanshard works out his arguments with great care. But after one has reflected on the first seventy-five pages, it may dawn on the reader that, contrary to Blanshard's intentions, there is no such thing as sensation. He himself acknowledges that no adult has, or remembers as a baby having had, a sensation. Thus there is no empirical evidence of sensation. Second, if there were, and if perception were an inference from sensation, it would be necessary to show which inferences are valid and which are invalid. Blanshard very carefully gives many examples of possible inferences; but he nowhere shows how to distinguish a true perception from a fallacious inference. If Blanshard has not done this, no wonder Christian evidentialists have not. Usually they have never even thought of the problem. To repeat: An apologetic system must begin at the beginning, not halfway along the road; and from the beginning every step must be validated. The challenge to the Christian evidentialist is: Can you from the sensation of blue – if blue is really *ein Gegebenes* and not already a universal – validly infer anything whatever? Apologetics must be systematic. How then can the doctrine of the Trinity be based on the visual sensation of blue or the tactual sensation of pain?

In the analyses of Logical Positivism and similar views, some arguments against empiricism have been indicated. The reader should consult the 2500-year history of philosophy. A few samples, if seriously considered, will suffice for the present purpose.

First, sensation or perception is untrustworthy. What one person sees as red and green, another sees as two shades of gray, and maybe not even as two shades. One focus makes a small near object, if such is the case, appear as a far large object. If a piece of canvas is painted half red and half green, a stroke of gray through the two backgrounds produces two different color sensations. To generalize, every sensation has a background; nothing can be seen alone. This background is one of the factors that give the object its observed qualities. Hence the Bible in your hand is not itself black; and if we do not know what color it is, how can we know it is a book at all? This question must not be ignored – if one wishes to be an empirical apologist. Remember the Texas rancher who was sure he was seeing a mirage and drove his jeep into a lake.

The same difficulty recurs in every sense. An example for taste would be the difference between drinking grapefruit juice and then eating ice cream, and eating the ice cream first and then drinking the grapefruit juice.

Though Thomas Aquinas did not seem troubled by these points, even he acknowledged that the sense organ had to be healthy in order to perceive the *real* color or taste of the object. But who knows whether his sense organs are in perfect condition or not? Even when medical tests discover no disease in the sense organs of two persons, must we say – that one person is sick because he does not like his taste of onions and the other is well because he gets a pleasant taste from them?

Differences in taste, optical illusions, tricks in perspective, color blindness, and then the too definite and too manifold distinctions in color that other people call hallucinations, fill elementary textbooks on psychology. The apologist who wants an empirical theory of language or an evidentialist defense of the faith ought to examine the foundation on which he wishes to raise a superstructure.

It is interesting to note what Calvin has to say on these subjects. To be sure, he was not a philosopher, but a good theologian must have some opinions on epistemology. The following quotations from the *Institutes* will show that he was not exactly an empiricist:

> The eye, accustomed to seeing nothing but black, judges that to be very white which is but whitish or perhaps brown…. If at noonday we look either on the ground, or at any surrounding objects, we conclude our vision to be very strong and piercing; when we raise our eyes to the Sun, they are at once dazzled and confounded…and we are constrained to confess that our sight…is dimness itself [I, i, 2].

> The powers of the soul are far from being limited to functions subservient to the body. For what concern has the body in measuring the heavens, counting the number of the stars, computing their several magnitudes, and acquiring a knowledge of their respective distances…. In these profound researches relating to the celestial orbs, there is no corporeal cooperation, but that the soul has its functions distinct from the body [I, v, 5].

There is more. A paragraph or two ago, the theory that perception is an inference from sensation was found wanting. But if one tries to escape this inference theory, he faces a harder difficulty. It is this. At any one time a person has impressions of red, smooth, sweet, and dozens of others. To perceive a thing, these "sensations" must be combined. Note that no one ever *sees* a dog or a tree. A dog is not just black; he is also soft, fuzzy, and perhaps has an odor. But before one perceives a dog, he must choose black, fuzzy, and odor, combine them, and only then has he the perception of his pet. Yet there is nothing in the single qualities that forces him to select these particular ones and discard the dozens of others he also has at the same time. Why does he not select the fuzzy, the sound B-flat, and the taste of Bacardi rum, all of which he senses at the same moment, and combine them into the perceived object? Is there anything in a person's fifty or more sensations that compels the selection of these few rather than another few? Usually people say that they combine the sensations emanating from the same place. Well, aside from the difficulty of locating the particular spot from which an odor, or sound, emanates, this answer presupposes a knowledge of space in general. Where, then, did

the knowledge of space come from? Has anyone seen, smelled, or touched it? Kant tried to defend a knowledge of space against Hume; but he could not remain an empiricist to do so. He had to have *a priori* forms of the mind.

The next difficulty, and with this one we may need no more to rid ourselves of empiricism, is the formation of concepts. The theory is that perceptions produce images which remain after the perception ceases. By a process of abstraction, concepts are formed or extracted out of these images.[1] There are two impossibilities here. First, the theory assumes that all people have such images. Did not Russell say that only a madman could deny it? So did Hume. Once again Brand Blanshard not only shows the futility of images for people who have them, but also brings before us a group of scientists and literary men, all well educated, who have no images whatever. Further, the present writer's investigations over a long span of years completely confirm the point. But second, the process by which concepts are allegedly abstracted from images is unintelligible. Aristotle simply gives an analogy. It is like an army in rout: One soldier makes a stand, then a second, and so on, until the army is in order again. This analogy is worse than most. It is unintelligibility raised to an unimaginable power.

Christianity, however, must have what most people call "abstract" concepts. Empiricism with its Nominalism cannot produce concepts, such as justification, federal headship, or Trinity. Nor can it produce the concept of the general conic, of vertebrate animal, or of tennis. To speak more precisely: There are no such things as abstract concepts. Abstraction is impossible.

This leads to another point. When a Christian uses the word *justification*, *Trinity*, or *theology*, he is using a name to designate a series of propositions. A student does not know botany: He knows that asparagus and the star of Bethlehem are members of the liliaceae. To know theology is to know that " Adam was the federal head of the race," and that "the elect sinner is justified by means of faith alone." Propositions, not concepts, are the objects of knowledge because only propositions can be true.

Theological propositions are usually universal propositions, and for that reason cannot be empirical. Empiricism is ruled out, not merely because these propositions are matters of revelation, undiscoverable by an unaided human mind, but because they are universal. "All who are justified are justified by faith alone" is a universal proposition. But induction never arrives at universals. And induction is all that empiricism has. By induction a young ornithologist may observe a thousand black crows – not to repeat all the difficulties of seeing even one black crow – and on the basis of these thousand observations he is likely to assert "All crows are black." Then the thousand and first crow is an albino. Induction never arrives at a universal. If so used, it is always a logical fallacy. Empiricism, therefore, is in a sad state, so that not much can be said in favor of a language theory or a theology based on it.

Finally, now the constructive theory can begin. If the secularist doubts that there is or can be a Christian theory, the Christian may doubt that the Bible discusses language at all. What verse or chapter defends metaphysics? What book gives us any verification principle? The *Psalms* indeed are poetry, but do they tell us that poetry is an advance over myth on the way to parables? Do they even teach otherwise? Though many believe that the Bible is silent on these philosophical matters, the following is an attempt to show that the Bible answers all these questions, and with reasonable clarity.

The Biblical Doctrine of Language

The first part of the answer, the first element in the formulation of a Christan theory of language,

and therefore the first criterion for judging the adequacy of Biblical revelation, is the doctrine of the image of God in man. Or, rather the very first part is the Biblical doctrine of God. Is God the "Totally Other"? Do God and the medium of conceptuality "*schliessen einander aus*," completely exclude each other? Or is God an object of thought and knowledge as much as or even more than the square root of minus one?

In thinking about God, Calvinists almost immediately repeat the *Shorter Catechism* and say, " God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable." Perhaps we do not pause to clarify our ideas of spirit, but hurry on to the attributes of " wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." But pause: spirit, wisdom, truth. *Psalm* 31:5 addresses God as "O Lord God of *truth*." *John* 17:3 says, "This is life eternal, that they might *know* you, the only *true* God…." *First John* 5:6 says, "the Spirit is *truth*." Such verses as these indicate that God is a rational, thinking being, whose thought exhibits the structure of Aristotelian logic.

If anyone objects to Aristotelian logic in this connection – and presumably he does not want to replace it with the Boolean-Russell symbolic logic – let him ask and answer whether it is true for God that if all dogs have teeth, some dogs, spaniels, have teeth? Do those who contrast this "merely human logic" with a divine logic mean that for God all dogs may have teeth while spaniels do not? Similarly, with "merely human" arithmetic: Two plus two is four for man, but is it eleven for God?

The verses quoted in the next to the last paragraph are only a small fraction of all those which teach the rationality of God. The mass of material that asserts or implies God's omniscience, material to which Charnock devoted a good two hundred pages, would, if repeated here, impress those who have unfortunately never read Charnock, but would doubtless seem tedious to others. Its shortest summary is 1 *Samuel* 2:3, "The Lord is a God of *knowledge*."

Special mention, however, should be made of God's seeing the end from the beginning, his doing all things well, his moral governance of angels and mankind, his choice of means (sometimes surprising) to accomplish his plans, and, of course, the plans themselves. From among the multitudinous instances let us consider only 2 *Chronicles* 14-20; and from these chapters only two texts: 16:9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to show himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him"; and 18:19-21, "The Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab…. Then there came out a spirit and stood before the Lord and said, I will entice him…. And the Lord said,…You shall also prevail: Go out and do even so." Here the Lord is said to have had and to have executed a rational plan to destroy Ahab. If, now, God works all things against his enemies, for our good, and for his glory, we may confidently insist that God is a rational being, the architecture of whose mind is logic. Irrationality contradicts the Biblical teaching from beginning to end. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not insane.

With this understanding of God's mind, the next step is the creation of man in God's image. The non-rational animals were not created in his image; but God breathed his spirit into the earthly form and Adam became a type of soul superior to the animals.

To be precise, one should not speak of the image of God in man. Man is not something in which somewhere God's image can be found along with other things. Man is the image. This, of course, does not refer to man's body. The body is an instrument or tool man uses. He himself is God's breath, the spirit God breathed into the clay, the mind, the thinking ego. Therefore, man is rational in the likeness of God's rationality. His mind is structured as Aristotelian logic described it. That is why we believe that spaniels have teeth.

In addition to the well-known verses in chapter one, *Genesis* 5:1 and 9:6 both repeat the idea. *First Corinthians* 11:7 says that "man…is the image and glory of God." See also *Colossians* 3:10

and *James* 3:9. Other verses, not so explicit, nonetheless add to our information. Compare *Hebrews* 1:3, *Hebrews* 2:6-8, and *Psalm* 8. But the conclusive consideration is that throughout the Bible as a whole the rational God gives man an intelligible message.[2]

This intelligible message not only includes accounts of historical events and God's explanation of them, but also a number of commandments and precepts. Though the gift of rationality was an inestimable blessing, it also carried danger with it. Because animals are non-rational, they cannot sin. Man could and Adam did. The very possibility of sin depends on a law that God imposes and that man can understand.

This point brings us to the central issue of language. Language did not develop from, nor was its purpose restricted to, the physical needs of earthly life. God gave Adam a mind to understand the divine law, and he gave him language to enable him to speak to God. From the beginning language was intended for worship. In the *Te Deum*, by means of language, and in spite of the fact that it is sung to music, we pay "metaphysical compliments" to God. The debate about the adequacy of language to express the truth of God is a false issue. Words are mere symbols or signs.

Urban distinguished between signs and symbols. If this distinction be accepted, words are signs. Even if his onomatopoeic words are symbols, it does him little good, for there is no inherent quality in the sound of *dog, chien*, or *Hund* to make them mean a certain type of animal. Any sign would be adequate. The real issue is: Does a man have the idea to symbolize? If he can think of God, then he can use the sound *God, Deus, Theos,* or *Elohim*. The word makes no difference; the sign is *ipso facto* literal and adequate.

Those who resort to myth, parables, or imagery – pictorial symbols used for inconceivable objects – and who declare that language is inherently inadequate and the mind inherently incompetent to speak about God, deny that God is able to attach signs to thoughts and to create a mind that can understand the thoughts. The god of Gilkey and Hamilton is not omnipotent; he is not God Almighty; he is powerless to give man any understanding of himself. Their god is unable to speak the truth to Abraham, nor can Abraham address himself intelligibly to him.

The Christian view, on the contrary, is that God created Adam as a rational mind. The structure of Adam's mind was the same as God's. God thinks that asserting the consequent is a fallacy; and Adam's mind was formed on the principles of identity and contradiction. This Christian view of God, man, and language does not fit into any empirical philosophy. It is rather a type of *a priori* rationalism. Man's mind is not initially a blank. It is structured. In fact, an unstructured blank is no mind at all. Nor could any such sheet of white paper extract any universal law of logic from finite experience. No universal and necessary proposition can be deduced from sensory observation. Universality and necessity can only be *a priori*.

This is not to say that all truth can be deduced from logic alone. The seventeenth-century rationalists gave themselves an impossible task. Even if the ontological argument be valid, it is impossible to deduce *Cur Deus Homo*, the Trinity, or the final resurrection. The axioms to which the *a priori* forms of logic must be applied are the propositions God revealed to Adam and the later prophets. Logic is stressed here, however, because empiricism not only makes revelation impossible: It makes thought and truth impossible. Liberal religion, therefore, must be mythological because, even worse, it must be irrational. And if irrational, of course there can be no meaningful revelation. Nor, for that matter, can there be any geometry. Geometry needs the universal and irreplaceable laws of logic, and these empiricism cannot provide.

Logic is irreplaceable. It is not an arbitrary tautology, a useful framework among others. Various systems of cataloging books in libraries are possible, and several are equally convenient. They are

all arbitrary. History can be designated by 500 as easily as by 900. But there is no substitute for the law of contradiction. If dog is the equivalent of not-dog, and if $2 = 3 = 4$, not only do zoology and mathematics disappear, Victor Hugo and Johann Wolfgang Goethe also disappear. These two men are particularly appropriate examples, for they are both, especially Goethe, romanticists. Even so, without logic, Goethe could not have attacked the logic of John's *Gospel* (*Faust*, 1, 1224-1237):

> *Geschrieben steht: "Im Anfang war das Wort!"*
> *Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort?*
> *Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh'ich Rath*
> *Und schreib' getrost: "Im Anfang war die That!"*

But Goethe can express his rejection of the divine *Logos* of *John* 1:1, and express his acceptance of romantic experience, only by using the Logic he despises.

To repeat, even if it seems wearisome: Logic is fixed, universal, necessary, and irreplaceable. As such its laws cannot be deduced from nor abstracted from experience. If *dog, cat, typewriter*, as well as *Wort, Geist*, and *That*, all mean the same thing – as they must apart from the law of contradiction – empiricism can express nothing: Goethe and Racine, Hegel and Kierkegaard are the same person.

Christianity, on the other hand, requires and justifies universal propositions as well as distinguishing Ahab from Jehoshaphat. The doctrine of the atonement, for example, that Christ's death was a satisfaction for sin, is a fixed truth and cannot be replaced by its contradictory. To bring this point up to date, the teachings of Scripture are not "culturally conditioned" so as to have been "true" in antiquity, but antiquated today. So also, the Ten Commandments – in this decadent age, an acceptance of premarital sex and homosexuality keeps company with a hue and cry against the " dictation theory" of inspiration. But what is so bad about dictation? Luke, of course, acknowledges that he made investigations; and it is not supposed that God dictated the wording of the birth narratives. But how else could Moses have written the Ten Commandments? These were not so much *dictated* as *written* out on stone by God's omnipotence. Note, too, that the first chapter of *Genesis* was not the result of historical or geological investigation. The genealogies in 1 *Chronicles* may have been copied from earlier documents; but in the case of Isaiah God must have mentioned Cyrus by name. Impotent gods may not be able to speak, but Jehovah spoke. Christianity is based on revelation, not experience.

Since God is both rational and omnipotent he faced no problem in adequately expressing his truth in words. Because man is also rational, he faces no inherent problem in understanding God's words. Since the fall, indeed, he is often likely to misunderstand. He is, however, more likely to understand quite well, but refuse to believe. Both misunderstanding and refusal to believe are to be classified under the pedantic category of the noetic effects of sin. The first may sometimes be attributed to the incompetence of the Christian preacher. But neither is the result of any inherent inadequacy of language.

Communication

As for the language of proclamation, the central truths of the Gospel can be expressed simply. It is also legitimate, even on many occasions, to use a more recondite literary style. God's prophets, if they do not use mythology, nonetheless use metaphors, poetry, and parable. These have their literary value. But their meaning can always be expressed in straightforward prose.[3]

Perhaps the problem of communication has here been somewhat neglected in the effort to defend logical thinking. But if symbols are always adequate simply because the thinker chooses an otherwise

meaningless sound or mark to designate his idea, there remains the difficulty of communicating the idea by means of the symbol to another mind. This is a point dear to the heart of Christian empiricists. "Don't you read your Bible?" they ask. "Don't you see the words on the page?" Now, these questions deserve an answer, and it shall be given. But note first that the empiricist has a harder time explaining communication than the rationalist or intellectualist has. How can sensationism produce a sound that conveys a meaning from one mind to another? Since my sensation is never yours, how can you ever know what the sensation is to which I attach a sound or ink mark? The empirical apologists usually evade this problem.

Augustine, with his Platonic background, did not evade. His discussion constitutes the second half of his tractate *De Magistro*. The good bishop showed, conclusively I should say, that the ostensive definitions of Logical Positivism's protocol sentences are failures. His solution was, briefly, not that two minds had the same sensations, but that two minds have the same ideas. The ideas are common because Christ is the *Logos* that lights every man that comes into the world. "In him we live and move and have our being." Malebranche, perhaps not to be followed in every detail, for no mere man is, used the figurative phrase, "We see all things in God." Perhaps a modern example will prove useful.

Before World War II, Japan, Great Britain, and the United States discussed naval limitation. The cryptographers in Washington got possession of Japanese documents written in code. Even though the cryptographers knew no Japanese, they were able to decipher the coded information. The reason is that logic is a form of every human mind. The Japanese may not use the Arabic numbers 5-5-3; but whatever characters they use, they cannot use the same character for every number. Similarly, Champollion deciphered the Egyptian hieroglyphics. And between the ages of zero and two a baby's logical mind can decipher whatever symbolism his mother uses. It is only college students who have trouble with German, French, or Greek, and dialectical theologians with English.

Scripture and Empiricism

This much should be sufficient for the subject of communication. The general Christian public, however, who do not hold doctorates in philosophy, are more interested in an exegetical problem connected with the question previously mentioned: "Don't you read your Bible?" Dr. Robert L. Reymond of Knox Seminary in Florida, one of two critics who have summarized the position here maintained with commendable accuracy, puts the problem in its clearest terms. He writes,

> There are scores of Biblical passages which teach by inference, if not directly, that sensory experience plays a role in knowledge acquisition (*e.g., Matt.* 12:3, 19:4, 21:16, 22:32; *Mark* 12:10; *Rom.* 10:14). It seems to me, before he will convince many Christians of his position, that Clark must explain satisfactorily (in another way than is virtually universally taken) literally hundreds of passages of Scripture which employ the words "see" "hear," "read," "listen," etc. At this time I am not convinced that he is in accord with Scripture when he denies to the senses a role in knowledge acquisition and would hope that he would take the Greek skeptics less seriously and the implications in many of the "subsidiary axioms" of Scripture more seriously than he does.[4]

Two pages earlier he cites 1 *John* 1:1-3, which is perhaps more pointed than the others, for it says, "That which…we have heard…seen with our eyes,…our hands have handled…that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." Do not these words guarantee that Christianity is a form of empiricism, a system based on experience?

Now, I am willing to exegete such verses, and I shall do so, briefly here and more at length in a commentary on 1 *John* that should appear shortly. But first there are one or two minor phrases in Reymond's paragraph that call for notice. His words "denies to the senses a role in knowledge acquisition" are vague, for they do not specify what role. Animals have more acute sensations than

human beings; but they know no mathematics, construct no syllogisms, nor do they write narratives. Sensation does not help them in these matters. Sleeping and eating play a role in knowledge acquisition in this life, for without them we would not remain in this life. But their role contributes nothing to the content of knowledge. Nutrition plays a role, but it is not true that "Der Mensch ist was er ißt." Philosophers who insist on giving a role to sensation in the acquisition of knowledge should first define sensation, then show how sensation can become perception, and presumably how memory images can produce universal concepts by abstraction. If this is not their scheme, and it might not be, then they should describe in detail what their scheme is. It is not enough to speak vaguely about some role or other. Plato gave the senses the role of stimulating reminiscence. Presumably this role would not satisfy Reymond. Augustine, though he altered his views as he grew older, gave a different role to sensation; without too much distortion one might call it a stimulus to intellectual intuition. Would that satisfy Reymond? It is hard to say because Reymond himself does not give any role to sensation. No doubt he believes that there is some such role, but I must have missed the page on which he tells what that role is. Now, it is not necessary for a critic to explain his own view in order to reject the view he is criticizing. But if one writes on *The Justification of Knowledge*, the readers expect a specific explanation.

This ties in with the second defect in the paragraph quoted. He thinks that I take the Greek skeptics too seriously. Of course, it is not the Greek skeptics alone that I take seriously. There are also Montaigne, Descartes, Bayle, Hume, and the contemporary experiments in psychology. It would be my desire that Reymond, with his considerable ability, might take all skepticism more seriously. Responsibility to the task of apologetics demands it. Unfortunately several conservative apologists, with whose theological views I am in substantial agreement, seem to me to have evaded this basic problem. It has been stated clearly in this monograph, and I cannot believe that it should not be taken seriously. Just one more minor point: Dr. Reymond's disagreement with my reply to Dr. Nash (112-113) omits one essential fact: The fact that Nash does not correctly report my view. He asserts that I hold, "Man cannot know the contents of the Bible save through the senses." If I am right in assuming that Reymond and Nash both reject the view that a sensation can be no more than a stimulus to recollection or intellectual intuition, then Nash does not correctly state my view, and hence his deductions from this statement are inapplicable to me.

However, we must get closer to exegesis. Before examining *First John* 1:1-3, it may be well to note that the word *sensation* (*aisthesis*) occurs only once in the New Testament: *Philippians* 1:9. Neither the *King James Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New American Standard Version,* nor the *New International Version* translate it *sensation*. It does not mean sensation. *Hebrews* 5:14 has *ta aistheteria* (the faculties of sensation). Some translators have "senses"; but clearly the word does not means senses in the sense used in discussions on sensation. Dr. Reymond's book does not explain a theory of language, and I would be the last to assign to him a view of language he does not hold. I only surmise that he rejects the theory of ordinary language, by which meanings are fixed by usage, for he seems to use the words *see, hear, sense* without considering how they are used in ordinary and Scriptural language.

What did the Apostle John mean when he spoke of seeing with the eyes and handling with the hands? Did he mean *aisthesis*, proper sensibles, common sensibles, sensation *per accidens*, or what?[5]

In Greek the first word of 1 *John* designates the Word of Life, who in verse 4 is identified as Jesus Christ. Since the *Epistle* and the *Gospel* have the same author, it is permissible to connect this *Word of Life* with the *Word* of *John* 1:1. And no one should object if we equate this Word with him whom Paul calls "the Power of God" and "the Wisdom of God." This second person of the Trinity is the

subject of John's declaration. Can this eternal Wisdom be heard with the ears, seen with the eyes, and handled with the hands? Is the second person of the Trinity an object of sense? The word *hearing* comes first; *seeing* comes second. This discussion will take them in turn.

As for hearing, one should note that no one can ever hear a piece of music or a line of poetry. Our opponents, who insist on sensation as the origin of knowledge, cannot well object to an instance taken from experience. Augustine pointed out that to "hear" music or poetry, one must at least "perceive" the rhythm. But there is no rhythm in a single sensation. Even beyond perception it is necessary to have memory before a line of poetry can be recognized as poetry. A single sound has no rhythm or meter. The first sounds of a line must be remembered until the last sound occurs; note also that the first sound no longer exists when the last sound sounds. Therefore no one ever senses music or poetry. This Augustinian remark should satisfy any empiricist; but it is not exegesis.

As the noun *aisthesis* in Scripture does not mean sensation, so, too, the verb to *hear* does not do so, either. *Exodus* 15:14 says, "The people shall hear and be afraid." The meaning is that the enemies of Israel will understand the danger of being defeated in battle. In *Numbers* 9:8 someone might want to insist that God spoke in audible words; but in any case an understanding of the directions is not found in the vibrations of the air or eardrums. *Deuteronomy* 1:43 indicates that Moses spoke audible words. Of course, the people *heard*. But the verse says they did not *hear*. What is meant is that the Israelites did not obey. *Second Kings* 14:11 says that " Amaziah would not hear." *Job* 27:9, "Will not God hear his cry?" Other references also, such as *Psalm* 3:4, speak of God's hearing prayers. Obviously the verb *hear* does not designate a sensation, for God has no eardrums to be affected by air vibrations. No sensation is possible in this case. The verse in *Job* means, of course, that God will not favor the hypocrite by granting his petition. *Psalm* 4:1, with its two instances of the verb *hear*, has nothing to do with sensation. The language is figurative.

Deuteronomy 29:4 allows a transition from hearing to seeing. The verse refers to "eyes to see and ears to hear"; but does it refer to the sense of sight? The phrase is similar to that in 1 *John*, "seen with our eyes…and our hands have handled." The verse in *Deuteronomy* says that God did not give the Israelites eyes to see and ears to hear. Does this mean that the Israelites had no eyeballs, retinas, and appendages on the sides of their heads? It does not mean even that the Israelites could not literally perceive: "the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive." The language is figurative and means, perhaps that they did not understand what God meant, or, more likely, that they understood but refused to obey. Hence, the language of 1 *John* does not necessarily, nor plausibly, refer to sensation and empiricism.

Genesis 3:5 is not a reference to eyeballs and retinas. *Genesis* 16:4 does not mean eyesight. Even though *Psalm* 13:3 refers to death, the word *eyes* is not literal. Similarly, *Psalm* 119:18. This instance cannot possibly refer to sensation, for what is to be "seen" is completely invisible. Then, most ridiculous of all, "the eyeballs of the Lord, on little feet, run to and fro throughout the whole Earth" (2 *Chronicles* 16:9).

A most interesting event occurs in *Daniel* 5:5, which says, "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote [*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*]…and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." Was this a sensation or an hallucination? Would it have been valid for Belshazzar to infer that he saw a physical hand? The astrologers saw the writing; but was this "seeing" a sensation? Did the writing remain visible on the wall until the Medes broke in and killed Belshazzar? This last question cannot be answered from the text; but it should be clear that Belshazzar's "seeing" was not what modern common opinion nor certainly modern philosophic opinion calls sensation.

Next consider a few verses from the New Testament. *Acts* 2:27, 31 say, "Neither will you suffer

your Holy One to see corruption…his soul was not left in Hell, neither did his flesh see corruption." This can hardly be taken as a denial of some color sensation. *Acts* 28:26-27 repeat in Greek the Hebrew phrases of seeing and not perceiving; closing their eyes lest they should see with their eyes. How can this refer to sensations of color, since all visual sensations must be sensations of color and nothing else? In 1 *Corinthians* 1:26 the seeing cannot possibly be a sensation.

Further Scripture references may be added: *Job* 19:26, "I shall see God" cannot be understood as sensation, for God is not a colored body; *Jeremiah* 1: 11, 13, though *visions* are not the sense of sight. *Genesis* 2:9, 11:5, and 31:50 are not about sensations. Since Moses' body lay buried on the east side of the Jordan, did Peter *see* Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration? And as for Peter, allow this paraphrase of *Matthew* 16:13-17: Whom do men say that I am?…and Jesus said,…Peter, you never arrived at that conclusion through any empirical investigation: It was revealed to your mind by my Father. Clearly the verb *to see* does not always, perhaps not even usually, refer to sensation.

This must suffice for the hundreds of verses to which Dr. Reymond alludes. I hesitantly suggest that his exegesis is defective because of the imposition of an untenable epistemology. But now 1 *John*. As in the *Gospel of John* 12:40, here, too, there is no reference to empirical sensations. The object, namely, the Word of Life, the Reason and Wisdom of God, is not a physical object and cannot be literally seen and handled. He does not have a color, nor any degree of hardness, wetness, or any quality of touch. Explicitly in *I John* the object is the truth or proposition, "God is light." This proposition cannot be seen in any literal *sense*. Therefore, since words are arbitrary signs, whose meaning is fixed by ordinary language, the hundreds of Scriptural verbs to which empirical apologists refer do not support the role of sensation which presumably – though they are never clear on what this role is – those apologists desire to give it.

To finish, once and for all, with the question, "Don't you read your Bible?" Abraham Kuyper in *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (I, 4, 57), beginning with a quotation from Guido de Bres, says,

> "That which we call Holy Scripture is not paper with black impressions." Those letters are but tokens of recognition; those words are only clicks of the telegraph key signaling thoughts to our spirits along the lines of our visual and auditory nerves. And the thoughts so signaled are not isolated and incoherent, but parts of a complete system that is directly antagonistic to man's thought, yet enters their sphere.

The analogy may still be too Behavioristic, but the main thought is sound.

One or two other points that Reymond makes are also worthy of mention. I have mentioned that, taking the Scriptural truths as axioms, all knowledge is deducible from them.[6] In opposition to this, Reymond and others object that this limits too much the extent of human knowledge. Reymond argues that if knowledge is limited to Scriptural implications, we know nothing at all. "I suggest that this would lead to skepticism, if not total ignorance" (110). This is remarkable: If we know the Bible, we know nothing! At the bottom of the page Reymond repeats, "So where am I left? It would appear with no certain knowledge of anything!" It would seem to me, contrariwise, that if a theologian can deduce six hundred pages of theology from Scripture, he knows quite a lot.

Of course, he does not know everything. On the view here defended knowledge is indeed limited. But what epistemology can guarantee omniscience to man? If Reymond will retract this inference to complete ignorance, I am willing to acknowledge that some truths he very much wants to know are not obtainable on my theory.

On the previous page Reymond had suggested that the *Westminster Confession* does not restrict knowledge to what can be deduced from Scripture. What those divines as individuals believed, I cannot say. There was one seventeenth-century writer, whom unfortunately I am unable to name, who held it possible to be infallible on one point and mistaken on others. His example was the "infallible"

knowledge of a ship-captain regarding the approach to a harbor. This hardly seems correct. But whatever the Westminster divines themselves thought, and whether some of them allowed for more extensive knowledge, Calvin limits knowledge to Scriptural truth. In the *Festschrift, The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark,* one quotation from Calvin is given, and in another of my volumes a second is given. The one in the *Festschrift* is, "I call that knowledge, not what is innate in man, nor what is by diligence acquired, but that which is delivered to us by the *Law and the Prophets*."

Cannot Calvin support his view by the statement of Paul in *Colossians* 2:3: "In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid"? If so, then no one will find knowledge elsewhere. Note also that the *French Confession* of 1559 says, "The Word contained in these [canonical] books…is the rule of *all* truth" (*la règle de toute vérité*).

The one piece of ignorance that Reymond seems most anxious to press against my view is knowledge of oneself. Self-knowledge has indeed been a philosophical ideal ever since Socrates said, *Gnõthi seauton*. But it is very difficult. Plotinus' *Enneads*, the extreme difficulty of which philosophers all acknowledge, can be understood as a gigantic attempt to achieve self-knowledge. Even those who think the ideal is possible of attainment must wonder whether anyone has succeeded. Now, Dr. Reymond laments that, on my theory, "Reymond is unknowable to himself and to everyone else except God" (110). He very correctly and adequately explains my reasons for saying so. I might add that I would be delighted to know Reymond myself, for he is a most interesting and gracious conversationalist. But two factors preclude this desideratum. First, "Reymond" is not a simple object of knowledge. "Reymond" is a name given to a very lengthy complex of propositions. On Reymond's position it must be possible to know some of these propositions without knowing others. On his position, if I dare guess at it, this must be the case. It is only a guess because he never says who or what he is. So perhaps Reymond does not know himself. This is not too surprising. Pendennis did not know himself. Or if this literary reference is not sufficiently classical, neither did Oedipus Rex. But these are only irritating *ad hominem* remarks. Like the Duchess' little boy, I only do it to annoy, because I know it teases.

Second, the Scripture says, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Did Peter know himself when he said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I"? Did Dr. X, who as a young man strenuously championed the inerrancy of Scripture and later asserted that Paul did not speak the truth in his epistles, know himself? Did Mr. Y, a good seminary student, know that he would die an alcoholic? Did tragic Z, a most faithful servant of the Lord for many years, know that he would be a suicide? Who can know himself? Maybe God is merciful in not revealing that knowledge to us.

In addition to the two scriptural references in the previous paragraph, consider *Psalm* 139:6. The *Psalm* as a whole extols the knowledge of God; but in doing so casts doubt on a man's knowledge of himself. "O Lord, you have searched me and known me…. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." If anyone dislikes this verse, or to put it more politely, dislikes my use of this verse, he should set down on paper the knowledge of himself he claims to know, and then demonstrate conclusively how he obtained that knowledge. Otherwise, objections to my view are simply begging the question.

The arguments that Reymond and others offer against my position are often plausible. To most people they sound like plain common sense. But sense, not to mention common sense, offers such enormous difficulties that I must be content with my more limited knowledge.

Furthermore, Reymond himself is not an empiricist and cannot consistently make use of sensation in constructing his apologetics. His account of Thomas Aquinas attests to that. Then, with reference to

Francis Schaeffer he writes, "Surely Schaeffer is aware that what a man observes is dependent on his religious *pou sto*. What Schaeffer observes may not be at all what another an observes" (142). Yes, indeed! But how, then, can Reymond, in opposition to my detailed arguments, insist on the infallible givenness of sensation? Note also, "I am not convinced that the world is so self-evidently the world that Schaeffer sees" (144). Wonderful! Then, too, Reymond's appeal to Scripture alone, on the following page, is much to my liking: "it is Scripture alone…not the observed phenomena." And when he quotes me, in such a gracious fashion, against my other good friend Montgomery (155), I fail to see his consistency. And since I hold him in high regard, I understand him to have accepted my position in his concluding paragraph, of which two clauses are: "the authority of the word of the self-attesting Christ of Scripture is the *only* ground sufficiently *ultimate* to justify human truth claims, and until his word is placed at the basis of a given knowledge system, that system remains unjustified and *no truth assertion* [none whatever] within it can be shown to have *any meaning at all*" (emphasis added).

If my esteemed colleague – and I do esteem him – wishes to make Scripture the sole basis of all knowledge, and then add on something from a different source, his consistency eludes me. Does he favor a Kantian combination of *a priori* forms and sensory content? Does he have two *a priori* forms of receptivity and twelve for spontaneity? This is another way of asking whether he can construct an integrated system. Similarly, he must provide a theory of language that not only preserves Biblical inspiration, but also shows how black marks on white paper give us the doctrine of the Trinity. Until he does so, he has no basis for rejecting other views.

Summation

Now, for a very brief summary or conclusion, we might return to the four questions in which Urban set forth the task of language philosophy: (1) How is language a bearer of meaning? (2) How is communication possible? (3) What is the relation of logic to language? And (4), which seems to be essentially the first question over again, How can language refer to things?

First, language is a bearer of meaning because words are arbitrary signs the mind uses to tag thoughts. Second, communication is possible because all minds have at least some thoughts in common. This is so because God created man a rational spirit, a mind capable of thinking, worshiping, and talking to God. God operates through his *Logos*, the Wisdom that enlightens every man in the world. Third, language is logical because it expresses logical thoughts. Not to deny the noetic effects of sin, examples of which are incorrect additions and various fallacies in reasoning, man is still a rational or logical creature and hence he cannot think three is four or that two contradictories can both be true. Language therefore is built upon the laws of logic. The fourth question has the same answer as the first.

Such in brief is the Christian theory of language. On an earlier page a hypothetical reader asked whether the Bible has any theory of language, and somewhere the answer was given that there are verses which at first sight may not be recognized as such, but which all the same are pertinent. Two of them now provide an appropriate finis:

Sanctify them through your word: Your Word is truth (*John* 17:17).

Anyone who guards my doctrine [*Logos*], shall not see death, ever (*John* 8:51).

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[1] D. C. Dennett in *Content and Consciousness,* 1969, 132-146 seems to be arguing that no one ever has any mental imagery. Much of what he says is hard to understand. One trouble is that he makes assertions that seem *prima facie* false. For example, "We can do without the dimensionlessness of mental images (that strange quality that prevents us from putting any kind of ruler, physical or mental, along the boundaries of mental images) and their penchant for inhabiting a special space of their own, distinct from physical space"

(141). Now, although I have no memory images myself, I accept the statements of Aristotle, Hume, and Russell that they do. And not only these philosophers; but after questioning classes of college students for fifty years, I am convinced that the great majority of people have visual imagery. A lesser percentage has auditory and tactual images. Hence, to reply to Dennett I can only ask this majority if they have ever dreamed of measuring something with a ruler. How Dennett can say that this is impossible is something I do not understand. His underlying Behaviorism, however, is no subject for a short footnote.

2 Compare Gordon H. Clark, "The Image of God in Man," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, XII, iv, 1969; reprinted in *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics*.

3 See my *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*.

4 Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge,* 1976, 114.

5 See my *Ancient Philosophy*, 161*ff*.

6 A technical qualification is that some Scriptural truths may be deduced from others. In such cases the former would not be axioms.

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